Three groups show their love for the environment. PAGE 5
DOL opens second round of PUA, FPUC applications. PAGE 7

Hafa Adai!

75¢

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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OGM will be hiring twelve furloughed govt workers

» Of $10.4M funds under the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, $6.5M must be used up by mid-August; all by Dec. 31

» For now, only US citizens, green card holders are eligible for rental aid

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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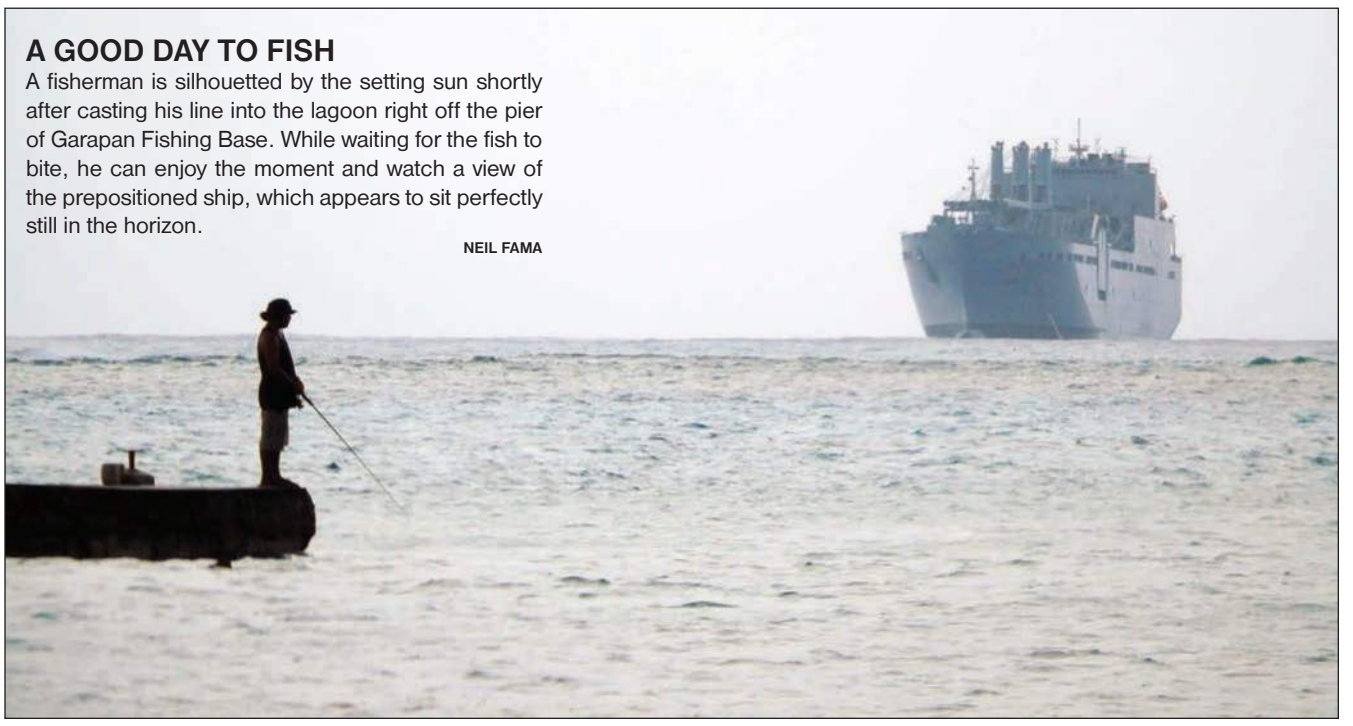
REPORTER

The Office of Grants Management is looking at employing 12 furloughed government employees who are due to be terminated, using the $10.4 million that the CNMI had already received through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

See OGM on Page 4

A GOOD DAY TO FISH
A fisherman is silhouetted by the setting sun shortly after casting his line into the lagoon right off the pier of Garapan Fishing Base. While waiting for the fish to bite, he can enjoy the moment and watch a view of the prepositioned ship, which appears to sit perfectly still in the horizon.

NEIL FAMA



Over 100 on Tinian complete COVID-19 doses

By JUSTINE NAUTA
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REPORTER

TINIAN—A total of 128 front-liners, high-risk first responders, and persons 65 years and older completed their COVID-19 vaccine doses on Tinian last Feb. 14.

The *New York Times* compilation of U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's data shows that the CNMI is ranked Top 5 for COVID-19 vaccination performance in terms of the percentage of people who have had at least one COVID-19 vaccination shot.

The Top 5, in order, are American Samoa, Palau, Alaska, Guam, and the CNMI.

See COVID-19 on Page 4

IPI workers allegedly tampered with departure dates

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

Despite efforts to repatriate Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's remaining Turkish workers, it was learned that these workers allegedly tampered with their flight schedules and pushed back their departure date.

Dotts

In his report to the U.S. District Court for the NMI, lawyer

See COVID-19 on Page 4

Carrazco, Cabrera are Tinian hot pepper eating champs

By JUSTINE NAUTA
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REPORTER

TINIAN—Ricardo Carrazco, a 25-year-old U.S. Navy Seabee, and Jessica Cabrera are the 17th Tinian Pika Fest hot pepper eating champions.

Carrazco, who is from Nebras-

See CARRAZCO on Page 4

From left Priscilla Iakopo, the Marianas Visitors Authority managing director, the 17th Annual Hot Pepper "Pika" Festival hot pepper challenger winner Ricardo Carrazco and MVA's Community Projects manager Martin F. Dueñas pose after Carrazco placed first in the hot pepper challenge at the Pika Festival last Feb. 13.

JUSTINE NAUTA

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

AT A GLANCE

As of 7pm, Feb. 15, 2021

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,689	10	7,699
Recovered	7,472	12	7,484
Active	75	10	85
Deaths	130	0	130
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			121,492

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	134	0	134
Traced via Travel Screening	108	0	108
Traced via Community Screening	26	0	26
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			26,131*
Days since last community transmission			180

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI
Saipan: 12,971
Tinian: 262
Rota: 353

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

INSIDE

LOCAL
Triple J hosts a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially open new Triple J Tinian projects.

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BUSINESS
Micafe's Snack Corner offers a variety of food choices that are budget-friendly.

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LIFE & STYLE
The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, Prince Harry and Meghan, are expecting their second child.

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SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Triple J cuts ribbon for its Tinian developments

Triple J hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Friday, Feb. 12, to officially open new Triple J Tinian developments: the Tinian Western Lodge and Hertz Rent-A-Car office for travelers, the Bar-K-Diner & Drive-In with take-away options for family platters, and also a Drive-In Lane that will serve breakfast, burger, and other sandwich options.

The Tinian Western Lodge has nine newly renovated rooms, each equipped with new furnishings, air-conditioning, bedding and other amenities. Upon entering the Tinian Western Lodge, guests are met with a warm welcome by staff members and a comfortable lobby designed for relaxation accompanied with a bar front connected to the Bar-K-Diner. The Diner operations hours are 7am to 9pm daily with breakfast options until 11am and thereafter an all-day dining menu including Bob's Big Burger (8 oz. certified Angus beef) and Sirloin Steak (12 oz. certified Angus beef) plate with a baked potato and steamed vegetables.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Triple J board chair and CEO Robert H. Jones, third from right, is joined by Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, third from left, and other dignitaries to cut the ribbon on new Triple J Tinian developments: the Tinian Western Lodge and Hertz Rent-A-Car office for travelers, the Bar-K-Diner & Drive-In last Friday, Feb. 12.

For those who prefer a quick meal on the go, the Drive-In is also open daily between the hours of 7am and 9pm with breakfast, burger, and beverage options. Local residents can also call in and order Family Platters for take-away 30 minutes before pick up by calling (670) 433-0045. The Family Platters feed up to four to five people, featuring Bar-B-Q Ribs, Crispy Pork Belly and CAB Beef items.

"Over 35 years ago, Triple J made a promise to help improve the quality of lives and build better communities in the CNMI. I am proud to say today we continue to be passionately committed to that promise," said Triple J board chair and CEO Robert H. Jones. "On Tinian, we saw a need for supplies and additional support for the community and military, so we took the initiative to fulfill that need."

There's more on the horizon. "We are also building a Five Star Wholesale store [that] will open in April for residents to have access to many more affordable products," Jones said.

Led by Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, Mayor Edwin P. Aldan, and Tinian Legislative Delegation chair Sen. Francisco Q. Cruz (R-Tinian), more than 100 government officials, business leaders and guests joined in the ribbon-cutting celebration.

In his remarks, Aldan commended Jones and Triple J for reinvesting in Tinian, noting "The Jones family has been very good to the CNMI."

Almost 50 years after Jones' brother, Ken, ran the Bar-K Ranch on Tinian in the '60s and '70s, creating jobs and economic opportunities for the Tinian community, "Bob Jones has returned to Tinian to do the same," said Aldan. "I would like to thank Bob Jones and the hardworking Triple J Enterprises management team and staff for your continued efforts in expanding your services to the people. Thank you for choosing Tinian to invest in and leading us towards growth and development for our island people. …It is certainly in our interest as leaders in this community to support efforts that allow for growth and development on Tinian to stimulate and revive our local economy."

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was timed to coincide with the Tinian Hot Pepper "Pika" Festival, Tinian's largest community event sponsored by the Marianas Visitors Authority.

For further information on lodge rates, call (670) 433-0044 and (670) 433-0045 for the Bar-K- Diner and (670) 433-0042 for Hertz Rent-A-Car office. ***(PR)***

AQUA RESORT CLUB
Saipan
COSTA'S BUFFET IS BACK!
at Aqua Resort Club Saipan
SEAFOOD NIGHT BUFFET
Our Seafood Night Dinner Buffet is back! Indulge in all-you-can-eat Seafood appetizers, entrees, side dishes and delicious desserts, All complimented with bottomless beer!
FRIDAY • 6pm-9pm
Adults $38 | Children $19
STEAK NIGHT BUFFET
Our delicious Steak Night Dinner Buffet is back! All-you-can-eat Steak, fresh salad bar, side dishes, and desserts. Free-Flowing Red & White Wine and Bottomless beer & sodas!
SATURDAY • 6pm-9pm
Adults $38 | Children $19
SUNDAY BRUNCH BUFFET
Treat your family & friends to Champagne Sunday Brunch featuring a delectable buffet of international cuisines, free-flowing sparkling wine & a beautiful, bright beachfront view!
SUNDAY • 11am-2pm
Adults $38 | Children $19
Costa
Terrace Restaurant
Limited Seating Available, Reservations Recommended. Call (670) 322-1234 for Reservations & More Information
COSTA IS OPEN FOR LUNCH! • A La Carte Dining • Friday, Saturday & Monday • 11am-2pm

$1.67M awarded to repatriate stranded A. Samoa residents

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs has awarded $1,670,450 in CARES Act grant funding to the American Samoa government to help repatriate American Samoans stranded outside of the territory since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic last year.

The American Samoa government has been coordinating with OIA and other federal partners to repatriate residents back to the territory and will use the OIA CARES Act funds to support pre-quarantine requirements necessary to help ensure American Samoa's ongoing status as the only U.S. jurisdiction without any COVID-19 cases.

"Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restriction of travel into the territory, hundreds of American Samoans have been stranded outside of the territory and have been unable to return home," said OIA director and acting assistant secretary for Insular and International Affairs Nikolao Pula. "OIA is pleased to support Gov. Lemanu Mauga and his administration in this historic and important operation to reunite families, while also promoting safety measures."

The repatriation has been a huge collective effort that includes health workers, ASG officials, Hawaii state officials, and federal officials. It also included community service and church organizations, such as the Tagata Tutufa'atasi Alliance of American Samoa, who have also provided food, shelter, and other on-going support to the folks who have been stranded since last year.

The funds will be used to purchase testing and cleaning supplies and provide overall support at the isolation and quarantine stage before departing Honolulu for the territory. The first repatriated group of 159 individuals arrived in American Samoa on Feb. 5 and will remain isolated for 14 days prior to being dismissed to their families.

A Feb. 5 press release issued by the American Samoa government states that protecting the territory from COVID-19 remains the No. 1 priority. Furthermore, the American Samoa government remains vigilant to ensure the safety and good health of the people, while making adjustments following the first repatriation flight to improve the efficiency of the process, and to utilize data collected to assure better decision-making. The American Samoa government hopes to be able to bring more residents home as soon as possible. An emergency declaration for the territory has been updated to make wearing a mask mandatory in public places, encourage residents to practice social distancing, and also encourage residents to take the COVID-19 vaccine.

For more information on grant assistance provided through OIA, visit: https://www.doi.gov/oia/financial-assistance. ***(PR)***

DoD personnel in Phases 1A-1C now being vaccinated

ASAN, Guam—U.S. Naval Hospital Guam has received additional COVID-19 vaccines, and is holding its vaccination clinic at the Top O' the Mar on Nimitz Hill in Asan for designated DoD beneficiaries and personnel in phases 1A through 1C.

Phases 1A through 1C include beneficiaries 65 years and older, beneficiaries 18-64 years old at an increased risk of severe illness as defined by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, and individuals who have been designated by their command as front-line workers.

"We encourage all eligible beneficiaries and personnel to take advantage of the vaccination clinic as this strengthens DoD's ability to protect our people, maintain readiness, and support the national COVID-19 response," said Rear Adm. John Menoni, commander, Joint Region Marianas. "This is a community-wide effort, and we are all in this together working hard to meet the intent of Operation Liberate Guam 2021, which is to achieve 80% immunity by Liberation Day."

Beneficiaries and personnel in the phases 1A through 1C are asked to visit the following link to make an appointment: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0c4fabac2ba7fbc25-65andolder

If these phases do not apply to you at this time, you are asked to remain patient as shipments continue to arrive and more vaccines can be administered.

Joint Region Marianas and USNH Guam expect to receive additional shipments in the coming weeks. ***(PR)***

Torres: Good economic viability coming to Tinian

Recent development on Tinian, including Triple J Enterprises' recently opened restaurant, car rental business, and mini-hotel, are being looked at as positive signs of a good economic viability coming to Tinian, according to Gov. Ralph DLG Torres.

Speaking at a news briefing last week, Torres noted that Triple J Enterprises' Robert "Bob" Jones is making a huge investment on Tinian. "It really shows that there is light at the end of a tunnel," he said.

Torres said that seeing a respectable and reputable company like Triple J operating on Saipan and now expanding to Tinian and bringing quality services to the island paints a great picture of economic vitality for Tinian and its people.

Triple J renovated its building on Tinian for its mini-hotel, restaurant, and car rental.

Last November, the governor disclosed that investors are now expanding to Tinian as the U.S. Department of Defense is moving forward with several projects on the island. Torres noted that the U.S. Department of Defense has made a lot of promises throughout the years or decades and that they are now seeing those promises being set in motion.

Meanwhile, Torres also disclosed that he and Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios will be discussing the performance of their Cabinet and that he and Palacios talked about having a survey and rating.

"The lieutenant governor and I will be discussing as to where we go from here with the Cabinet," said the governor, adding that it's not necessarily a reshuffle. He did not elaborate. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Free webinars on federal contracting

The Guam Procurement Technical Assistance Center is offering free live webinars this month. Webinars run from 10am to 11:30am and will be conducted via Zoom. Links to the live webinar and the webinar evaluation will be emailed to all registered attendees 15 minutes before the start of the webinar.

■ Feb. 18 – Cybersecurity: The Guam PTAC will discuss what federal contractors can do to make sure they are complying with DOD requirements with respect to keeping data protected. DOD's upcoming Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification and the DFARS Interim Rule will be discussed.

■ Feb. 25: PIEE – Do you have a DOD contract and need to get paid? The Guam PTAC will explain DOD invoicing procedures using the Wide-Area Workflow module in the Procurement Integrated Enterprise Environment system.

Register on our website, http://guamptac.com/news-and-events.php. ***(PR)***

SAMSUNG
Epic is here
Galaxy S21+ | S21 Ultra
Now available.
Galaxy S21+
$249*
Unlimited Data
Galaxy S21 Ultra
$499*
Unlimited Data
Earn 500
PACIFICPOINTS
with select Postpaid Plans.*
ite.net itecnmi itecnmi
*Terms and conditions apply. Advertised pricing is available only on a 24-month agreement on the $80/month plan. Colors subject to availability. Subject to credit check. Visit ite.net or see stores for details.
IT&E

Kilili: House panel agrees with Biden's $2K relief package

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) said over the weekend that the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee has agreed with President Joe Biden's commitment for a total direct payment to taxpayers of $2,000 by adding $1,400 to the $600 in the December relief package.

Since the last week of January 2021, taxpayers have started receiving the $600 economic impact payments, also known as the second stimulus.

The U.S. Department of Treasury approved the CNMI 2020 Recovery Rebate Credit and Second Economic Impact Payments Plan for $41.3 million.

In his e-kilili newsletter, Sablan also disclosed that the same committee approved last Thursday a section of the American Rescue Plan that extends through Aug. 29, 2021, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance with a $345 weekly minimum, and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation that is raised to $400 weekly.

At the same time, the committee increased the Child Tax Credit from $2,000 to $3,600 for each child under 6 years of age and to $3,000 for each child up to age 18.

"The federal government already covers 100% of the cost of the Child Tax Credit in the Marianas," said Sablan, noting that the committee, however, agreed to add 100% reimbursement to the Earned Income Tax Credit for working families in the Marianas to the Democrats American Rescue Plan, as well, consistent with legislation that he first introduced in 2015.

He said the House passed his 100% EITC reimbursement but the Trump administration blocked it in the Senate with a veto threat. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

OGM

From Page 1

Speaking at a hearing called by the House of Representatives' Committee on Health and Welfare last Friday, OGM administrator Epiphanio Cabrera Jr. disclosed that they are working with the special assistant for administration in identifying furloughed government employees to fill some of the positions needed for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

When committee chair Rep. Tina Sablan (D-Saipan) asked how many furloughed employees they'd need, Cabrera said they put a budget together for about 12 positions. He said they are trying to get those furloughed employees first before they hire new employees for the program.

Last Tuesday, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres informed the Legislature that he has instructed line agencies to start reduction-in-force procedures involving 180 government employees that are on furlough right now. That means eliminating the positions that these employees used to hold. That would effectively mean termination from their jobs. Torres described the move as part of ongoing cost-containment measures to ensure the continuity of public services.

"I have no choice when we don't have any tourism and revenue," Torres said, adding that the government would need $5,688,239 this fiscal year 2021 in order to re-employ these people.

Once the OGM pushes through with hiring these 12 furloughed employees, that will still leave 168 government employees jobless.

As to the who are eligible for rental assistance under the grant fund, Cabrera said that, for the moment, that would be U.S. citizens and green card holders. However, he said, they are working with U.S. Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) in trying to ascertain whether non-U.S. citizens also qualify or not. Cabrera said Delegate Sablan is working with his congressional research staffers and that they hope to get an answer as soon as possible.

Cabrera pointed out that, according to the guidelines from the U.S. Department of Treasury, these funds must be expended by Dec. 31, 2021. However, he said, 65% of those funds—which is what $6.5 million—must be expended by mid-August.

"So we have a lot of work ahead of us to try and expend these funds," said Cabrera.

The CNMI was awarded $10,400,669 for rental assistance and utility relief through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program under the recently enacted Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.

Cabrera said the program aims to reduce evictions and to keep CNMI citizens in stable homes, especially during the COVID-19 emergency.

He said their office received word last Jan 15 that they had two days to submit an application to get this assistance. "So we did submit in two days, and about a week and a half later, we received word that $10.4 million was deposited into the CNMI Treasury," Cabrera said.

He said they are working to get the system up, to get all the infrastructure up to assist all those that need rent and utilities assistance.

Cabrera said eligible households may receive up to 12 months of rental assistance plus an additional three months, depending on the household's circumstances.

He said payments to existing household-related arrears as far back as March 13, 2020, will be prioritized before consideration of any future rent payments.

"Once a household rent arrears are reduced, the state may only commit to providing future assistance for up to three months at a time," he said.

Cabrera said OGM has submitted all documents to the Department of Finance for the creation of the new business unit for this program. The documents are currently with the Office of Management and Budget for the final posting, so that they can use the business unit accordingly.

OGM will use 90% of the funds for the benefits for the renters and utilities assistance, while 10% is going to be used for administrative costs. Cabrera said that comes out to $1.04 million for administration and $9.36 million for benefits.

"OGM is working hard to get the new office properly set up to accommodate all the clients, the incoming clients, including locating an administrative office space, fixing communications, maybe networking, getting the necessary office furniture and fixtures," he said.

Cabrera said the Northern Marianas Housing Corp. has emergency solutions grants, which is their version of the renter's assistance program. He said they had met with NMHC and Division of Youth Services officials in the past two weeks to prevent the duplication of federal assistance to these possible clients.

Cabrera said pre-applications will be made available starting today, Feb. 16. He said the pre-applications can be picked up at the Office of the Governor.

Cabrera said they are trying to find a new office for that program.

IPI

From Page 1

Michael Dotts, who represents IPI, said that more difficulties with repatriations arose this week when the 11 Turkish workers who were scheduled to leave yesterday changed their departure dates last Sunday.

"On Feb. 15, 2021, 11 employees were supposed to depart for Turkey. IPI paid for and gave them their tickets, paid for COVID-19 testing in Guam, and paid for a two-night stay in a hotel in Guam. Sunday afternoon it was discovered that the employees had changed their tickets and moved the departure dates to August. IPI is working with the attorney representing the Turkish employees to resolve the matter," he said.

He did not cite a reason why the workers tampered with their plane tickets and moved their departure dates.

In addition, Dotts noted that the Turkish workers who were supposed to leave refused to sign acknowledging receipt of the $250. "The workers who were scheduled to return to Turkey early Monday morning requested money to cover food and other travel expenses. IPI had them sign a general release in receipt for $250 each in cash. IPI has agreed that the employees did not release any claims in exchange for the cash," he said.

In regards to housing, Dotts reported that IPI is ready to close down Vestcor Village housing and will also close down Lau Lau housing on Feb.23.

"IPI employee housing still has power. IPI is ready to close Vestcor. The two holdover employees who had been refusing to leave are moving out today. IPI should be able to close its large housing known as Lau Lau on or about Feb. 23, as the final residents in that housing will depart the CNMI on Feb. 22," he said.

Dotts explained that closing down employee housing will reduce the burden on IPI in paying for utilities but they will continue to pay for security at these facilities.

IPI is also looking at reducing its kitchen and cleaning staff as workers are repatriated.

"Food services have continued without interruption for all H-2B workers. As workers are repatriated, the financial burden of feeding them will go down and IPI will also soon be able to reduce its kitchen and cleaning staff," Dotts said.

As of last week, 29 IPI employees have been repatriated while over 128 remain on island.

The largest group of IPI workers that need to be repatriated, according to Dotts, are the Mongolian workers, with over 100 still on island. Dotts said they remain here as available flights are still pending.

There are still 11 Turkish IPI workers who remain but were set to depart yesterday, Feb. 15. There are also 11 Taiwanese workers that remain on island but they have already applied for change of status.

A total of six Malaysian workers refuse to leave because they demand their paid time off and to be paid their 75% guarantee, while two Italian workers said they will not leave due to a pending lawsuit against IPI.

CARRAZCO

From Page 1

ka, he said he actually started eating hot peppers since he was young. "I was always known for eating spicy things, I would eat ghost pepper, Carolina reapers, then I got to Tinian and I tried the donne sali pepper, and it was hotter than what I've tried before," he added.

When asked how he prepared himself for the contest, he said ate some donne sali peppers a few days before the contest.

Carrazco, who arrived on Tinian about three weeks ago with the other Seabees, said he was excited to be here in time for the Pika Festival because it's so much fun. He added that he does construction work for the U.S. Department of Defense as part of his daily work on Tinian.

On Saturday, Carrazco bested 11 other male contestants for the coveted Pika King title. Each participant had to chew 100 donne sali hot peppers one at a time. Placing second was Gen Song while Kirk Johns finished third.

The men's category was held on Feb. 13, and the women's category was held on Feb. 14.

Cabrera, who won first place in the women's category, placed first out of five competitors.

Winners received cash prizes from the Marianas Visitors Authority, the Tinian Office of the Mayor, and the 18th Tinian Municipal Council.

The Tinian's Hot Pepper "Pika" Festival is dedicated to Tinian's potent donne sali hot pepper.

In her remarks, MVA managing director Priscilla Iakopo said that it is because of the compliance of the community that MVA was able to host this annual event.

"It's truly the respect and care for others and keeping our communities safe that has helped make this weekend festival possible," she said.

Social distancing protocols were strictly implemented at the festival grounds, and these included temperature checks and hand-washing areas.

COVID-19

From Page 1

The chart, which was updated last Feb. 14, shows that the CNMI has administered 29,650 first and second doses, using 45% of the vaccines that were allocated to the CNMI. The *New York Times* also recorded that 9.5% of the CNMI population has been given both shots.

In a telephone interview, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. chief executive officer Esther Muña said that 134 individuals on Tinian had their first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine this past weekend, while 128 have already completed their second dose.

At the 17th Annual Hot Pepper "Pika" Festival, emcee Santi "Big Boy" Sablan, announced that CHCC had a tent set up for Tinian residents to get registered for vaccination.

According to Muña, 20 homebound residents—10 on Saipan and 10 on Rota—were able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. It was learned that Rota is expected to start their second dose next Sunday.

As of Feb. 15, CHCC recorded on their dashboard that 8,486 people have received their first COVID-19 vaccine, and 4,485 have received their second dose. These include Phase 1B on Saipan, 1A on Tinian, and 1A on Rota.

As for the CNMI's general population, it is still unclear when they will be able to receive their first dose.

COVID-19 in Guam

Guam ranked fourth place nationwide in terms of the percentage of people who have had at least one COVID-19 vaccination shot. Citing the *New York Times* compilation of U.S. CDC data, at least 16% of Guam's population have already received the first dose, with 6% getting the second dose as of Feb. 13, 2021.

Guam has had a total of 51,300 doses delivered, 37,750 shots given and 74% of the doses used.

"There are many reasons for variation among the states and territories, including demand for the vaccine, lags in data reporting and other logistical challenges," the *New York Times* stated.

Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero acknowledged Guam's ranking and even quoted Gen. Gustave Perna, Operation Warp Speed's chief operating officer, as saying that Guam is "crushing it out there."

"We're trying to get as many vaccines as we can because our logistics and our distribution infrastructure have greatly improved. I know there have been issues recently, but we took care of those immediately," said Leon Guerrero during an interview with NewsTalk K57's Patti Arroyo.

Three groups show their love for the environment

Volunteers from three organizations showed their Valentine's Day love and island spirit by conducting a beach cleanup at a northern beach on Saipan on Saturday, Feb. 13.

As a part of their spirit week, about 60 members of Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School, Kensington Hotel Saipan/E-Land Corp., and the Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance staff partnered to clean Paupau Beach as a way of giving back to the community.

"We had our [Student Council] 'Love Your Environment Day' aligned with their Spirit Week," said GTC principal Raena Camacho. "When we first started meeting with the STUCO we asked them about ways they could give back to their community and so one of their ideas was the beach cleanup."

To the group's surprise, the beach was fairly clean that day.

"I was a little bit surprised today because usually the place is a little bit…messier than this," said Brian Shin, chief executive officer of E-Land Corp., highlighting how the cleanup was completed in less than two hours. Shin said it may be due to more public awareness and cleanup events such as the one held.

"This is a very small step from the environment preservation perspective, but I think this will raise the awareness of what we can do to contribute to keep our place clean and safe," Shin said.

A GTC counselor said the cleanup instilled a greater appreciation for the island's beauty in the students.

"I think that it is really great for our kids to be out here appreciating nature and the environment and just preserving the beauty of the CNMI," said GTC counselor Hope Gomez.

She was grateful for the collaborative effort amongst the different organizations. "What stuck out to me was how so many organizations were here…working together to make it a success," Gomez said. "I am thankful for the partnerships that we had with MINA…and Kensington today."

Kensington Hotel Saipan provided cleanup volunteers and to-go meals for every participant that day. MINA staff equipped volunteers with cleanup supplies and hauled the trash away.

Volunteers from Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School, Kensington Hotel/E-Land Group and the Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance pose for a group photo last Saturday, Feb. 13, after completing a beach cleanup at Paupau Beach. RAENA CAMACHO

Camacho was also grateful for the two groups, adding that having the parents come out to support their children was meaningful.

"I really want to thank the parents, especially, for showing up with their kids this morning," said Camacho. "It is always great to see our parents excited to participate and join us."

Shin said that being a part of the community is important to his company, but even more is that it brings everyone together to take pride in the islands. "Whenever there is an opportunity like this, we want to be a part of it, especially for a good cause like this," Shin said. "This shows that the community has come together with the organization around the area to keep our own places clean." ***(PR/Kennedy Benjamin)***

Students and parents with Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School pick up trash and other debris at Paupau Beach during a Love Your Environment Day event sponsored by GTC's Student Council, Saturday, Feb. 13. Kensington Hotel/E-Land Group and the Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance partnered with GTC as a way of raising public awareness for the environment. RAENA CAMACHO

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

OPENING DATE: February 16, 2021 CLOSING DATE: March 03, 2021 TIME: 4:00 P.M.

NMHC JVA No.	Positions:	Salary:
2021-016	CDBG-DR Project Manager (1-Position)	UNGRADED $50,000.00 to $60,000.00- per annum

Employment application form, detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information can be accessed at www.nmhcgov.net and www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com.

Applicants may submit their applications through the following options: Submission at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan; Drop Box located in front of the NMHC Central Office building; or email application and documents to officemanager@nmhcgov.net.

All applicants must complete and submit the NMHC Employment Application Form together with required documents that are listed in the Employment Application Package. Failure to provide the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. NMHC and all its properties are drug-free zones; therefore, selected applicant will be subject to pre-employment drug screening.

It is the policy of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) that the merit system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by its personnel regulations and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-6866/9447 or by email to officemanager@nmhcgov.net. NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

Brilliant Star School celebrates Lunar New Year

With red lanterns swirling around entryways, handmade red good luck signs pasted everywhere, and bright red clothing running around the campus, it was hard to miss the fact that Brilliant Star Montessori School celebrated Lunar New Year this past week.

Brilliant Star School students were especially busy last week decorating their classrooms for the New Year and learning how to draw traditional Chinese characters with calligraphy brushes to hang on the windows. By lunchtime on New Year's Eve, the whole campus smelled like fresh dumplings, which were handmade by each class.

Mandarin is Brilliant Star School's second language and is taught in every classroom from infant to 12 years old.

"It is nice to be able to keep many of our [school] traditions alive through this year and also continue to educate our island's children," said upper elementary teacher Lindsay Davis.

Indeed, a sense of normalcy is important for children in these uncertain times and Brilliant Star School aims to continue providing high quality, culturally-sensitive, child-centered education to its students. ***(PR)***

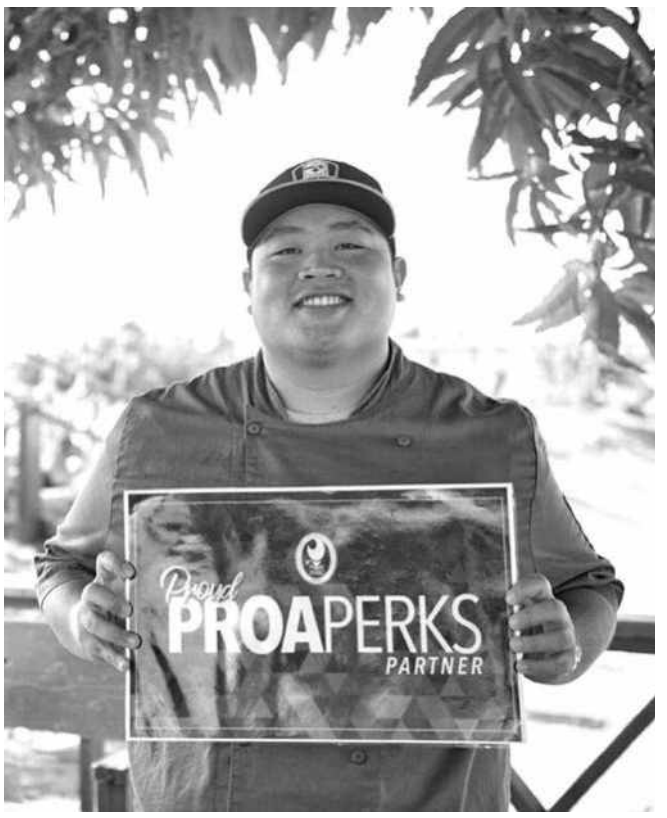
Brilliant Star Montessori School celebrated Lunar New Year this past week with red lanterns on entryways, handmade red good luck signs pasted everywhere, and many wearing bright red clothing.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ocean Candy is latest NMC ProaPerks Partner

Sushi catering company Ocean Candy is the latest business to sign on as a Northern Marianas College ProaPerks Partner, joining many other businesses and organizations that provide exclusive discounts and benefits for NMC students, employees, and alumni.

All card-carrying members of the NMC ProaPerks program can now receive 10% off on medium and large sushi platters. Orders can be placed by calling or texting (670) 287-2291 or by sending a direct message to their Instagram page (@oceancandy670).

Ocean Candy joins the growing list of ProaPerks partners, such as 153 Restaurant, 360 Restaurant, 4EVER CNMI, Alamo Car Rental, AllStar Sporting Goods, Aqua Connections, Inc., Athlete's Foot, Boarderline, Bolis R US 2, Bubba Gump Caravan of Food, Casa Urashima, Chelu Alynez Enterprise, Coral Candy, Docomo Pacific, D' Chef's Kitchen, Dollar Days (Garapan), Enterprise Car Rental, Ete Cafe, Fishing Tackle and Sporting Goods, Fork and Spoon, Garapan Restaurant Cafe & Grill, Gold's Gym, Grandvrio Resort Saipan, Great Harvest, Boyer Trading Company LLC. dba Ginen Saipan, Healing Stones Spa, Highway Express Auto Care Center, Herman's Modern Bakery, Inc./Tan Marikita's Cafe, Hertz Rental Car, Hyatt, Ice Island Coffee & Ice Deserts, Ina's Kitchen, Isla Shave Ice, Junlyn Salon, Kentucky Fried Chicken/Tacobell, Kevin's Cafe, Kiki's, Latte Build Gym, Lohas Massage, Magbers Snack Bar, Marianas Creation, MMC & Pacific Labs, LLC, Mermaid Restaurant & Milk tea, Nam Dae Moon, National Car Rental, Natural Nail & Spa, Neni Girl Nails, NMC Bookstore, Ocean Star Restaurant, Pacific Home Appliances, Pena House Boutique, Saipan Computer Services, Salty's, Shirley's Cafe, Summer Snow Cafe & Kids Corner Cafe, Surf Club, The Pacific Supply, The Shack, Tribe Marianas, and Triple J Motors.



Ocean Candy is now a proud NMC ProaPerks partner. All card-carrying members of the NMC ProaPerks program can now receive 10% off on medium and large sushi platters.
NMC

NMC is in the introductory phase of rolling out the ProaPerks to alumni, students, and employees. For more information, visit marianas.edu/proaperks.

Companies and other interested organizations who would like to become part of the ProaPerks program and take advantage of the buying power of thousands of individuals that include Northern Marianas College alumni, students, and employees, can find more information by emailing proaperks@marianas.edu. ***(NMC)***

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

5.1-magnitude quake on Pagan

At 1:15am on Feb. 15, 2021, a report of a 5.1-magnitude earthquake occurred at 314 miles north-northwest of Pagan, Northern Marianas Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center. ***(PR)***

CHamoru commission meeting set

The *Kumisión i Fino' CHamoru yan i Fina'nå'guen i Historia yan i Lina'la' i Taotao Tåno'* (Commission on CHamoru Language and the Teaching of the History and Culture of the Indigenous People of Guam) will hold its second February monthly virtual meeting on Feb. 18, 2021, Thursday, from 12:30pm to 3:30pm on a Zoom link. Email Kumisión board secretary Rosa Salas Palomo for Zoom Link Information, special accommodations and agenda at (kailee.rosapalomo@gmail.com) and/or administrator Anna Marie B. Acreo at (sainaguinifi@gmail.com). ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLAND
WEBEX MEETING FEBRUARY 23, 2021

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
Honolulu Regional Office - Public Contact Team

Will host a Virtual Benefits Workshop for Veterans, Family Members, Surviving Spouses, and Community Providers
on
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2021

From
5:00PM-7:00PM (CNMI LOCAL TIME)

To participate please join us in Cisco Webex by clicking or copying and pasting the following link:

**DOWNLOAD SLIDES AT: https://www.benefits.va.gov/honolulu/

https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/veteransaffairs/j.php?MTID=ma0c4b5a9905c1e48148bcc671fa9b9ed

You can join via Computer, Phone Audio (1-404-397-1596, 1998705956##), or Webex Mobile App

Benefits Workshop Topics:
Compensation, Pension, Education & Training, DIC, Survivor Benefits, Loan Guaranty, Veteran Readiness & Employment, Burial and Plot Internment Allowance, Burial Flags, & Insurance

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)

(This ad is paid for NMHC with HUD funds)

NMHC IFB 2021-006

BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME: March 10, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Building Maintenance Services for NMHC Housing Units in Rota

Project package will be available on **February 08, 2021,** at the NMHC website at www.nmhcgov.net by clicking on the "Procurement" tab.

The provisions of the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

A Mandatory Pre-Bid conference will be held via video teleconferencing on February 19, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. through Zoom Video Communications. Bidders will be provided the video teleconferencing link on the NMHC website at www.nmhcgov.net by clicking on the "Procurement" menu tab. Bidders are encouraged to email the Procurement Officer of their intent to participate in the pre-bid conference via email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net at least one day before the conference. Failure to attend the Mandatory pre-bid conference will be considered a non-responsive bidder.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer, at (670)234-6866/9447 or email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net during regular business hours, 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ Jesse S. Palacios
Corporate Director

/s/ Marcie M. Tomokane
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

DOL opens second round of PUA, FPUC applications

The CNMI Department of Labor will begin accepting applications for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation as a result of COVID-19 for affected workers in the CNMI starting today, Feb. 16, 2021, through March 13, 2021.

What is PUA?

The PUA program provides temporary benefits to individuals whose employment or self-employment has been lost or interrupted as a direct result of COVID-19. The PUA program, through the Continued Assistance Act, provides eligible applicants in the CNMI with 11 weeks of unemployment benefits starting on Dec. 27, 2020, to March 13, 2021.

What is FPUC?

Under the CAA, for weeks of unemployment beginning after Dec. 26, 2020 and ending on or before March 14, 2021, an individual collecting PUA may collect a $300 FPUC payment per week.

Who can apply for PUA/FPUC?

Due to the extensive nature of the eligibility conditions and requirements for PUA, consult the "PUA/FPUC Benefits Rights Information Handbook" found on the CNMI Department of Labor's website at: http://www.marianaslabor.net, under "Forms and Publications" for details.

Application filing dates

Individuals may apply for PUA if they have had a week(s) of full or partial unemployment on or after Dec. 27, 2020, through March 13, 2021, as a result of COVID-19. Individuals may file applications for PUA starting today, Feb. 16, 2021, and ending March 13, 2021.

How and where to apply

ONLINE: Claimants may apply for PUA either online or in person. Submit a PUA application online at the following address: www.hiremarianas.com. PAPER: PUA applications and other forms may also be obtained and submitted at either of the following location(s):

Saipan: Department of Labor Division of Employment Services Building # 1334, Ascencion Dr., Capital Hill, Saipan, MP 96950

Rota: Northern Marianas College Room #A2 Rota, MP 96951

Tinian: Department of Labor Edu's Plaza, 1st Floor San Jose Village Tinian, MP 96952

***NEW Paper Application Submission Instructions:** To combat the effects of COVID-19, the Saipan PUA Program is strictly implementing the following application submission schedule from Feb. 16, 2021, to March 15, 2021 (Monday - Friday) from 8am to 3pm:

Monday: Only accepting paper application submissions for last names "A" to "C"

Tuesday: Only accepting paper application submissions for last names "D" to "H"

Wednesday: Only accepting paper application submissions for last names "I" to "M"

Thursday: Only accepting paper application submissions for last names "N" to "R"

Friday: Only accepting paper application submissions for last names "S" to "Z"

Important Notes: In consideration of the Feb. 16 opening date falling on a Tuesday, the department will also be accepting paper applications for last names beginning with "A" to "C" along with "D" to "H" only. In consideration of the application end date falling on a Saturday (March, 13, 2021), the department will accept paper application submissions on the Monday (March 15, 2021) following the deadline.

Required documents

***NEW:** Individuals filing a new PUA application on or after Jan. 31, 2021 (regardless of whether the claim is backdated), are required to provide documentation within 21 days of the application or the date the individual is directed to submit the documentation by CNMI DOL, whichever is later.

***NEW:** Individuals who applied for PUA before Jan. 31, 2021, and receive a payment of PUA on or after Dec. 27, 2020 (regardless of which week ending date is being paid), are required to provide documentation substantiating employment or self-employment, or the planned commencement of employment or self-employment, within 90 days of the application or when directed to submit documentation by CNMI DOL, whichever is later.

To receive PUA, individuals must submit in-person or upload online the following: (1) A government issued picture identification (driver's license, passport, alien registration card, etc.), (2) Social Security Card number, (3) If applicable, copies of the most recent federal income tax form(s), check stubs, and other proof of earnings, and (4) If applicable, evidence of self-employment earnings, business license, including financial documents such as 2017 federal/CNMI income tax forms, profit and loss statement, and proof of business loss due to the disaster.

All inquiries

Individuals who have questions about the PUA/FPUC programs are encouraged to email info@puamarianas.com or call any of the following numbers between 8:00 am through 4:00 pm, Monday – Friday, except on holidays.

Saipan: (670) 322-8870/71/72/73/74/76/77/78/79/80 or 989-9190/ 92/93/94
Rota: (670) 989-9001
Tinian: (670) 989-9000 or 433-0889

Further information

Individuals who are determined eligible for PUA must file weekly claim certifications (to demonstrate their continued eligibility) either in person or online by using any of the filing methods described above. Continued eligibility is determined on a week-by-week basis. Consult the "PUA/FPUC Benefits Rights Information Handbook" found on the CNMI Department of Labor's website at: http://www.marianaslabor.net, under "Forms and Publications" for details.

Individuals who willfully conceal material facts or knowingly making false statement(s) to obtain PUA to which they are not entitled will be required to repay all benefits fraudulently collected and may be subject to prosecution under 18 U.S.C. 1001.

Fraud hotline

Individuals are encouraged to call 670-989-9095 to report any perceived instances of wrongdoing or fraud pertaining to the PUA/FPUC programs. ***(PR)***

Interior provides $5M for RMI trust fund

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs has provided $5 million in funding to the Republic of the Marshall Islands as provided by Congress for tax and trade economic compensation due to adverse financial and economic impacts under the Compact of Free Association. Congress designated that this funding be deposited to the Compact Trust Fund for the People of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

"These funds will bolster the Trust Fund corpus and supports the goals under the Compact of Free Association agreement that our two nations share," said OIA director, chairman of the Compact Trust Funds, and acting assistant secretary Nikolao Pula.

Made available through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, the funds will be deposited to the Compact Trust Fund as required by law and supplements an earlier payment of $5 million authorized by Congress in January 2020 for the same purpose.

As provided for under the Compact of Free Association agreement, the Compact Trust Fund was established to contribute to the economic advancement and long-term budgetary self-reliance of the people of the Marshall Islands when annual grant assistance under the Compact expires at the end of fiscal year 2023. ***(PR)***

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Keep the skies friendly

Shouting matches and expletives creating turmoil at 30,000 feet pose a serious danger to airline crews and passengers. While there have always been a few rude passengers—usually the ones drinking a few too many mini-bottles of vodka or such—the problem seems to be growing.

The pervasive rudeness permeating our public discourse at all levels now is taking to the skies. It's not only rudeness over politics—some selfish passengers don't want to comply with mask requirements, others fight over reclining seats or the size of carry-on luggage. Passengers allegedly assaulted Delta agents in Detroit in January over a baggage dispute.

Delta CEO Ed Bastian is proposing a solution to passengers who create in-flight troubles—a lifetime ban from flying, at least on Delta.

"Those who refuse to display basic civility to our people or their fellow travelers are not welcome on Delta," Bastian said.

It's an idea worth considering and may be a reasonable way to protect crews and passengers. The last thing airline travelers need is to have to listen to and see rowdy behavior when they're trying to read or sleep or do some work.

American Airlines also reported politically motivated problems on recent flights.

Bastian's proposal isn't the harshest remedy available. The Federal Aviation Administration says it will go after passengers who cause problems in airports and on planes—including pursuing fines and imprisonment.

About 800 passengers already have been banned for failure to comply with mask requirements—those bans last only until the mask mandate on the airline ends, for now.

Unruly passengers have caused issues before, but the problem has accelerated since the November presidential election and the Capitol riot.

The problem was already obvious, though. It was back in August when a Black woman had to put up with a series of rude and uncalled for comments from the woman sitting next to her on a Delta flight. In April, a Spirit flight to Detroit was diverted because of a fight on board.

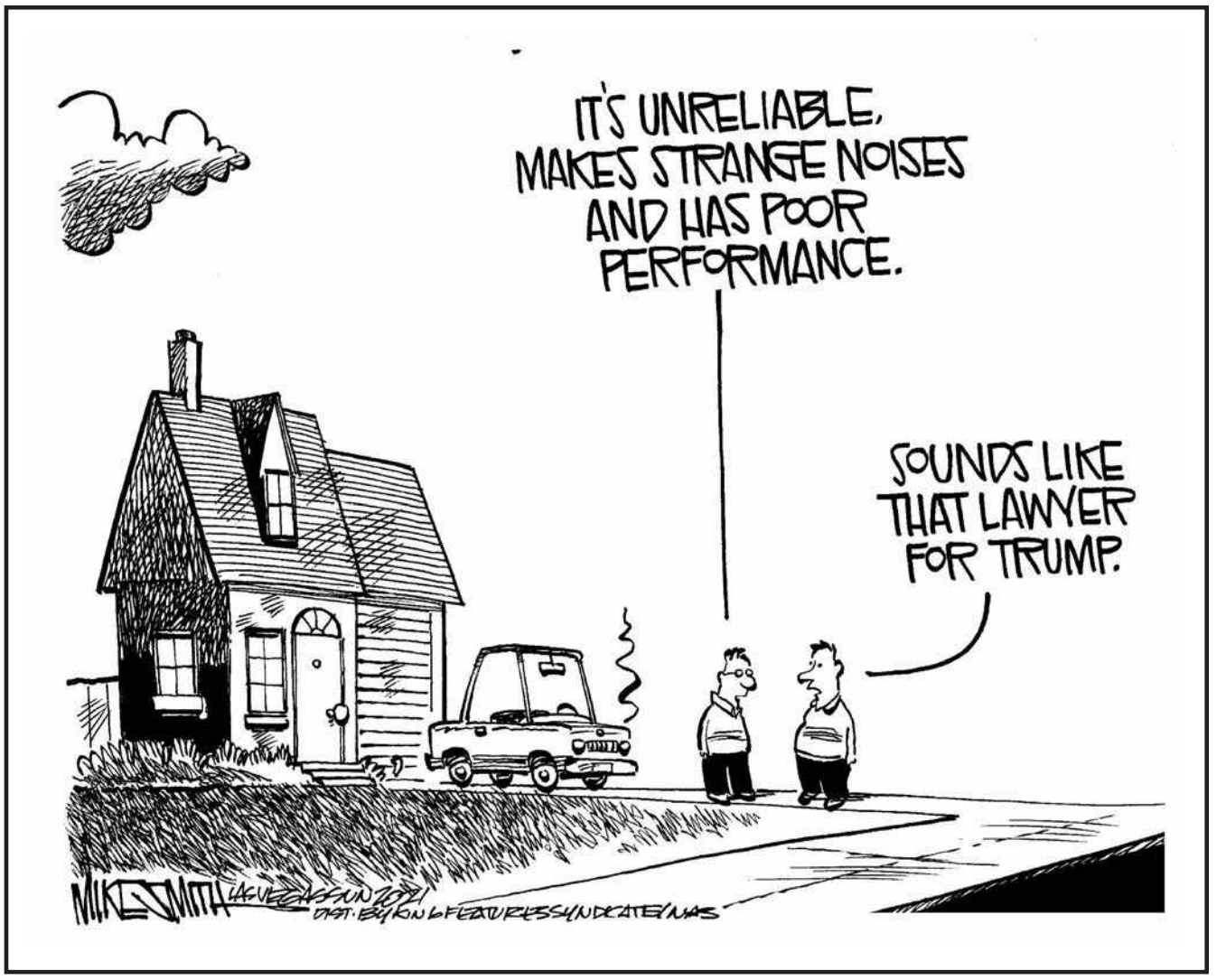
Implementing the ban and setting the standards for discipline of passengers could be tough and likely will result in lawsuits. One trouble is the question of who decides what constitutes rudeness or incivility. It's abundantly clear in cases that involve flights that must be delayed or diverted, or when offensive words are directed at another passenger. Delta should spell out a list of behaviors that could lead to a ban for rude behavior.

Delta is a private company and has some leeway to impose rules on travelers—as long as they are nondiscriminatory.

Troublemakers on a flight probably are the same sort of neighborhood bullies who demand attention for themselves and must get their way.

Give those folks food for thought when they find they

See KEEP on Next Page


IT'S UNRELIABLE, MAKES STRANGE NOISES AND HAS POOR PERFORMANCE.
SOUNDS LIKE THAT LAWYER FOR TRUMP.
MIKE SMITH LAS VEGAS SUN 2021
DIST. BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE/NAS

Everyone has to pay when America gets too old

By NOAH SMITH
Bloomberg View

Noah Smith is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist. He was an assistant professor of finance at Stony Brook University, and he blogs at Noahpinion.*

The U.S. needs a national population strategy. Falling immigration is combining with a decline in fertility to put us in danger of joining the club of Europe and East Asia, where people are wealthy on paper but still feel squeezed by the need to support an increasing number of elders.

The idea of population policy will seem alien to many Americans. But that's just because we were so lucky for so long. The U.S. combined unusually robust fertility for a rich country with sustained high levels of immigration. But the first of those advantages is evaporating quickly, and the second is under threat.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the U.S. had a fertility advantage over its rich-world peers. But since the 2008 Great Recession, that advantage has evaporated.

Much of this is due to a big decline in fertility rates among Hispanic Americans, who are now below the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman. That's not only because of a precipitous drop in Hispanic immigration (since immigrants tend to have more kids), but also probably to changing norms and values among Hispanics. And this was happening before the COVID-19 pandemic, which has lowered birth rates even further. No one knows how much of that most recent decline will be permanent.

Immigration, too, is down. My colleague Justin Fox is optimistic, noting that the number of people becoming permanent residents in America has held up through the Donald Trump administration and the pandemic. But the number of new visas issued by the U.S. fell by almost half in 2020.

If that decline is sustained, it will reduce the number of people becoming permanent residents down the line.

With sub-replacement fertility and declining immigration, America faces a grayer future. The age dependency ratio—how many elderly are in the population as a percent of working-age adults—was already rising before Trump's presidency and the pandemic, and recent trends will only push it up more.

Of course, it will take a while for the U.S. to fall into the same category as Japan, where long lifespans and chronically low fertility have combined to produce the world's most aged society. But it may not be long before the U.S. starts feeling the bite of population aging: slower growth, greater demands on government health and pension systems, and more resources and time diverted to elder care.

Aging isn't an economic death sentence; countries can do a number of things to mitigate the challenges it presents. They can use more automation to make up for labor shortages. They can encourage people to keep working longer. In countries where there is a gender participation gap in the labor force, governments can encourage more women to work as Japan successfully did in the 2010s. A gender gap might have opened in the U.S., too, so there's some opportunity there.

But these measures only go so far. Automation technologies are usually complements to human workers, rather than substitutes, so there's a limit to how many people we can replace with machines. Ditto on the limits of getting old people and labor-force dropouts to just work more. If the U.S. wants to avoid becoming yet another graying, stagnating wealthy society, it has to get more young people.

Encouraging immigration is an important piece of any population strategy. In the wake of four years of anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, U.S. leaders should deploy pro-immigrant rhetoric similar to that of former President Ronald Reagan. Let everyone know that America's doors are open again and that it welcomes the people of the world. On top of that, the U.S. should create new programs to actively recruit the types of immigrants who will swell the tax base the most. The two best ideas are to create a new program similar to Canada's Federal Skilled Worker Program, and to allow states and cities to sponsor immigrants for employment-based green cards (again, similar to how Canada does things).

Then there's fertility. Many rich countries have striven to raise their fertility rates, often with no success. But economist Lyman Stone, looking at a wide range of studies, concludes that paying people to have more kids has a modest effect on birth rates. So it's possible to raise fertility by a little bit.

The child benefits now being proposed by President Joe Biden, Sen. Mitt Romney and others would be exactly the kind of thing that would give American fertility a modest boost. Efforts to decrease the high cost of child care might likewise ease the financial and time costs of having kids. We can't expect miracles from

See EVERYONE on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

What's behind America's insistence on instilling grit in kids?

By PAIGE GRAY
FORT LEWIS COLLEGE

THE CONVERSATION—In the same way that actual grit accumulates in the cracks and crevices of the landscape, our cultural insistence on possessing grit has gradually come to the forefront of child-rearing and education reform.

Recent academic papers on grit include the education-leadership dissertation project of New England College's Austin Garofalo, titled *Teaching the Character Competencies of Growth Mindset and Grit To Increase Student Motivation in the Classroom*, and UMass Dartmouth professor Kenneth J. Saltman's *The Austerity School: Grit, Character, and the Privatization of Public Education*.

In contrast to the range of perspectives on grit offered in academia, the popular media will often frame it as an essential characteristic for healthy, productive maturation—and certainly a necessary component for academic success.

In 2012, Paul Tough's book on the topic, *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character*, was a critical and commercial success, earning positive acclaim from *Kirkus Reviews, The Economist, The New York Times, Slate*—and even former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

And last year, in a column for *The Washington Post*, Judy Holland, editor and founder of ParentInsider.com, wrote that the "coddled kids" of the "'self-esteem' movement in the 1980s" produced children who were "softer, slower, and less likely to persevere."

"Grit is defined as passion and perseverance in pursuit of long-term goals," she continued. "Grit determines who survives at West Point, who finals at the National Spelling Bee, and who is tough enough not to be a quitter."

As someone who specializes in children's literature and cultural attitudes toward childhood, I've been interested in this insistence on fostering grit. I've also taught writing and literature over the past year to West Point cadets, who, it seems, must learn how to acquire this somewhat elusive quality.

But I can't help but wonder if we're talking about grit in an unproductive way. And maybe one of the problems is that it's presented as a concept: abstract, indeterminate and somewhat magical or mysterious.

How can we define grit, or the idea behind it, in a way that means something? What if we're not framing the discussion of grit in the right way, since grit can mean something entirely different for a kid living in the Chicago's South Side than it does for a kid living in the suburbs?

A slippery buzzword?

In 2014, National Public Radio's Tovia Smith looked at how educators and researchers are using the concept of grit in the classroom. She interviewed MacArthur Genius Grant recipient Angela Duckworth, associate professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and author of *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, which was published in May. In it, she considers how teaching grit can revolutionize students' educational development.

"This quality of being able to sustain your passions, and also work really hard at them, over really disappointingly long periods of time, that's grit," Duckworth told Smith in the NPR segment. Expanding on the national significance of grit, Duckworth added, "It's a very, I think, American idea in some ways—really pursuing something against all odds."

But more recently, Duckworth has backtracked from some of her earlier advocacy. In March she told NPR's Anya Kamenetz that the "enthusiasm" for grit "is getting ahead of the science." And Duckworth has since resigned from the board of a California education group that's working to find a way to measure grit.

As Kamenetz notes, part of the problem with buzzwords like "grit"—and the attempt to measure or implement them in the classroom—"is inherent in the slippery language we use to describe them."

Is grit something that can even be taught? Can we measure it? Is it a trait or a skill? If a quality like grit is a trait, then it may be genetic, which would make it difficult to simply instill in kids. If it's a skill or habit, only then can it be coached or taught.

Grit's place in children's literature

The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that grit—the kind that describes "firmness or solidity of character; indomitable spirit or pluck; stamina"—originated as American slang in the early 19th century. It's easy to see its kinship to the other definition of grit: "minute particles of stone or sand, as produced by attrition or disintegration."

It's come to represent a refusal to give up, no matter the odds—a refusal to wash away, break down or completely dissolve.

American children's literature has long had "gritty" protagonists: characters who've arguably instilled moralistic values of bravery, industry and integrity in generations of readers.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, another word featured in the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s "grit" definition figured more prominently in mainstream children's literature—pluck.

Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn both exhibited pluck, seen in their wily charm, adventurous spirit, and underlying moral conscience. But the notion of pluck, grit's forefather, was largely popularized in Horatio Alger's stories, which are known for their hardworking young male protagonists trying to eke out livings and educate themselves within the American urban landscape.

"Dick knew he must study hard, and he dreaded it," Alger wrote in his landmark text, "Ragged Dick." "But Dick had good pluck. He meant to learn, nevertheless, and resolved to buy a book with his first spare earnings."

Though he hates it, Dick studies hard because he believes he needs an education "to win a respectable position in the world."

The determined, plucky child figure arguably evolved into one of grit through Mattie Ross in Charles Portis' 1968 western novel of revenge set in the late 19th century.

The novel quickly establishes Mattie's resilience and resolve, which solidify after the murder of Mattie's father. Mattie, reflecting on her doggedness, says, "People do not give it credence that a fourteen-year-old girl could leave home and go off in the wintertime to avenge her father's blood."

Grit to what end?

Mattie Ross and Horatio Alger's clever street boys helped shape an American ideal of youthful grit. But these fictional characters asserted their grit because they had goals. What good is grit if you feel like you have nothing to strive for?

In early children's literature for African-Americans, publications such as W.E.B. Du Bois' monthly youth magazine *The Brownies' Book* attempted to also give its young readers an idea of what they could achieve. While much of American children's literature during the turn of the last century—and even today—filters ideas of grit through the perspective of the middle-class white child, The Brownies' Book specifically addressed the lives and experiences of African-American children. First published in 1920, the magazine encouraged African-American children to fully embrace their cultural identities, participate in their communities and become citizens of the world.

But that was 1920, during the dawn of the Harlem Renaissance, a time when the work of African-American artists, activists and thinkers brought newfound optimism to the push for racial equality and cultural pride. Over the course of the 20th century, circumstances for many children of minority communities changed. As Atlantic writer Ta-Nehisi Coates has explained, a public policy of ghettoization has left many urban school districts impoverished and underserved, with few examples of hope or achievement outside the drug trade. Yes, kids could develop grit—they could find confidence, diligence and resilience outside the law—a version of grit demonized by mainstream society.

David Simon's Baltimore-set HBO series *The Wir*e illustrates the narrow possibilities for black kids growing up in the city. Grit, as depicted in *The Wire*, comes via success in the drug trade. This kind of grit has the bottom line of economic gain. It's not about a search for identity, cultural understanding or artistry because kids don't think they have the same opportunities and potential highlighted in the issues of *The Brownies' Book*.

A 2014 study from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights found that in America, there still exists a pattern of racial inequality in public schools, whether it's course offerings, teacher performance or student expulsion. These statistics—the same as those echoed in *The Wire*—leave many somber, dejected, angry or, too often, complacent.

So how can students have—or learn—grit when all kids face different realities—different struggles, different dreams and different social structures?

Yes, it's important to reevaluate the education system, as monumental a task that may be. But all institutional or systemic change starts with the individual.

"A lot of what *The Wire* was about sounds cynical to people," Simon said in a 2009 Vice interview. "I think it's very cynical about institutions and their ability to reform. I don't deny that, but I don't think it's at all cynical about people."

Maybe the first step is to think of grit not as something to cultivate in students. Instead, maybe grit is the debris—the dream—that lingers. If children and young adults get that piece of grit stuck to them, they'll be motivated to keep going until the grit is gone.

Perhaps the job of adults, then, isn't to tell kids to buckle down and work through adversity. It's about opening their eyes to the innumerable possibilities before them—so they'll want to persevere in the first place.

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished from The Conversation under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article here: https://theconversation.com/whats-behind-americas-insistence-on-instilling-grit-in-kids-65314.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A long story short

I recently arrived back on Saipan after a day's long flight, recovering from a medical issue, and very tired.

I am writing to thank the staff of the Airport Arrival and the Marianas Resort Quarantine Facility.

I must admit I was apprehensive about what was going to happen to my life during this whole "quarantine" thing. But from the moment I arrived on island until my release from quarantine five days later, every possible need was taken care of.

I would like to thank Warren Villagomez and the COVID-19 Task Force for their well-planning. I would like to give a special thanks to Jack Sablan at the Mariana Resort, the staff and workers at all the facilities for their going the extra mile—everyday.

I'd rather not be quarantined—but if I must—I've learned I can count on our fellow islanders.

Steven Brownstein
Papago, Saipan

EVERYONE

From Page 8

these measures—the baby boom is not coming back—but they might nudge the fertility rate up a bit closer to the sustainable replacement level. We don't have to get all the way back to 2.1 in order to stabilize the population—immigration can do some of that—but stabilizing at 1.8 or 1.9 instead of falling to 1.5, as many rich countries have, would be a big deal.

Most important, the U.S. simply needs to change its mentality. Population stability was never something we had to worry about before, but it is now. Fortunately, some writers like Matt Yglesias are now vigorously calling for higher population growth. Hopefully this issue will get more attention in the next few years.

KEEP

From Page 9

can't book a flight at the nearest airport and need to make other travel arrangements.

Bastian should follow through on his proposal, and other airlines should consider similar bans. Doing so might prove an actual deterrent to the yahoos who think they have the right to behave badly and turn a simple flight onto an ordeal for fellow passengers and the flight crew.

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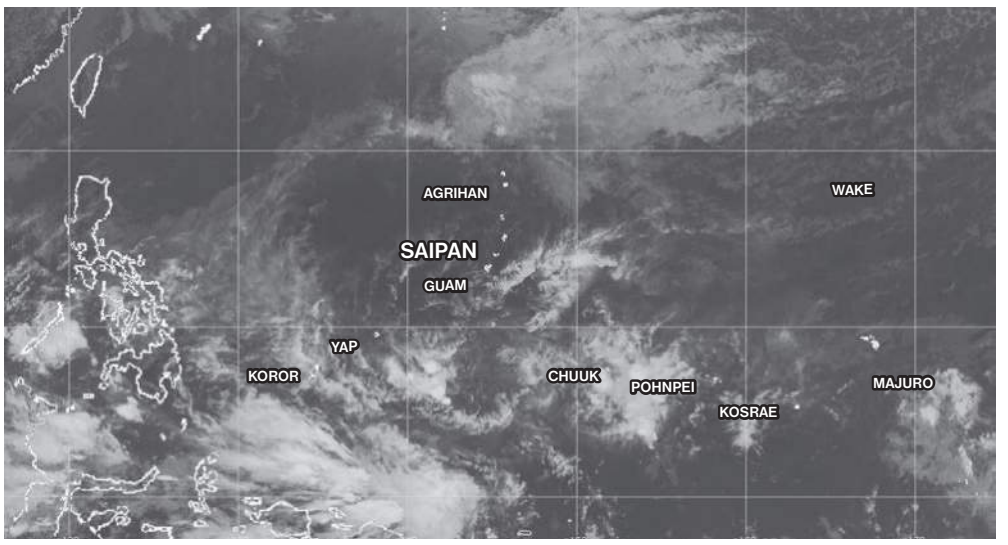
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly sunny with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Mostly sunny with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
86º 76º	86º 76º	87º 77º	87º 77º	86º 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:07 AM, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2021

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows substantial high clouds moving over the Marianas from the south. Underneath, the low-level trade-wind showers look to be rather sparse indeed. The showers and thunderstorms creating the cirrus clouds are about 150 miles to the south. The buoys reveal combined seas of 6 to 7 feet composed mainly of an east trade-wind swell and a north swell from a cold front that moved off Japan.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Showers	85 | 78 °F
Palau	Partly cloudy	85 | 78 °F
Yap	Thunderstorms	87 | 71 °F
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85 | 80 °F
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	86 | 79 °F
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	86 | 79 °F
Majuro	Thunderstorms	84 | 80 °F

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:41 AM	6:21 PM
Wednesday	6:40 AM	6:21 PM
Thursday	6:40 AM	6:21 PM
Friday	6:39 AM	6:22 PM
Saturday	6:39 AM	6:22 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	9:36 AM	10:04 PM	-
Wednesday	10:11 AM	10:51 PM	-
Thursday	10:47 AM	11:38 PM	-
Friday	11:25 AM	-	-
Saturday	-	12:27 AM	12:06 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly cloudy 77 | 62 °F
Beijing	Sunny 50 | 24 °F
Hong Kong	Overcast 66 | 56 °F
Honolulu	Partly cloudy skies 78 | 67 °F
London	Cloudy 51 | 36 °F
Los Angeles	Sunny 64 | 45 °F
Manila	Generally fair 92 | 75 °F
Melbourne	Sunny 91 | 55 °F
Miami	Partly cloudy skies 79 | 63 °F
New York	Fog 62 | 52 °F
Osaka	Cloudy 58 | 38 °F
Paris	Windy 52 | 39 °F
Pusan	Partly cloudy 42 | 22 °F
Rome	Mostly cloudy 59 | 49 °F
Salem	Partly cloudy 45 | 31 °F
San Francisco	Sunny 53 | 43 °F
Seoul	Sunny 36 | 18 °F
Tokyo	Windy 63 | 41 °F
Washington, DC	Fog 73 | 54 °F

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
4:32 AM	Low Tide	0.18
10:51 AM	High Tide	1.63
5:17 PM	Low Tide	0.57
10:41 PM	High Tide	1.41

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❑ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❑ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❑ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❑ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2021

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 6
UA117	7:00am	7:40am	4

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 6
UA174	5:15am	5:56am	4

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:55pm	5:56am+1	3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	5
UA184	10:55pm	4:40am+1	1, 3

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 9, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

MICAFE'S SNACK CORNER:

A wonderful spot for family and friends

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

CONTIBUTED PHOTO
Micafe's Snack Corners specialty drinks.

BEA CABRERA
Micafe's Snack Corner is a new place in Dan Dan across Joeten for good food, coffee, and specialty drinks that are budget-friendly.

BEA CABRERA
Micafe's Snack Corner is a great place to hang out whether it is with family or friends.

Known for their "Rice-in-a-Box' series and delicious barbeque, Micafe's Snack Corner located across Joeten Dan Dan offers a variety of food choices ranging from appetizers, noodles, and main dishes that are budget-friendly. Once you step inside, the décor immediately lends a relaxed atmosphere with a stay-here-for-a-while vibe.

Michaela Gatdula co-owns the café with her uncle Edwin Montoya and they wanted to build a modern/earthy vibe-inspired café with a lot of wood elements that is always a welcome sight on island. "During my high school years, I've always considered opening up a cafe but I've never really took it serious until my mom, Nenette Gatdula, and uncle, Edwin Montoya, took action and made my dream into a reality," she said.

"We wanted to make sure that we serve high-quality food with an affordable price for everyone, especially during this pandemic… What makes Micafe's Snack Corner unique from other cafes on island is how we want to promote environmental awareness, we wanted to make sure that the products we use are eco-friendly such as our reusable/recyclable bottles and cups, disposable paper bags, take-out box, and straws," she added.

Their main dishes include island favorites such as kare-kare (oxtail dish), garlic shrimp, beef finger steak, sirloin steak, and fried chicken. Their variety of fried rice includes kimchi fried rice, garlic fried rice, longanisa fried rice, and shrimp fried rice. Barbeque sticks of chicken, pork, and beef isaw coated with a special marinade are also available.

Gatdula said that their place and food offerings aim to keep everyone happy. "We also wanted to share God's words by including them in our décor—as a way to bring comfort and positivity towards our community…We want every customer [who comes in our café] to step out with a smile on their face. A smile of satisfaction from our products and service and a smile of positivity from the encouraging words we try to share with them every time they come to visit."

"We also wanted to make sure that we make everyone's safety our No. 1 priority. We take serious precaution in the social-distancing rule and we make sure that we check and monitor their temperature before entering as well as sanitizing and making sure that all of the products we use are disinfected," she added.

Aside from giving people a fun spot to go to, Gatdula said that they added some entertainment too. "We have board games, cards, and books for people to disconnect and enjoy quality time. We made sure that it's comfortable for people of any age. Overall, we wanted to create a space for people who can enjoy and relax while eating or drinking."

This cafe/restaurant wouldn't have been possible without the help of Nenette and Joseph Gatdula, Duncan Laxa, Edwin and Kolinta Montoya, Richard Solis, Jaysan Gatdula, and Nicole and Jerome Perez… My family and I really enjoy cooking so it's really amazing to share to the community what we love doing," she added.

Micafe's Snack Corner is open from Monday to Friday, 7am-2pm (serves breakfast and main menu) and 5pm to 9pm (main menu) and Saturday and Sunday, 10am-2 pm (main menu) and 5pm-9pm (barbeque only). For more information, call (670) 235-6422 or follow them on Facebook: micafespn and Instagram @micafe.spn.

'Obamacare' sign-ups reopen as Democrats push for more aid

WASHINGTON (AP)—HealthCare.gov's market for subsidized health plans reopens Monday for a special three-month sign-up window as the Democratic-led Congress pushes a boost in financial help that could cut premiums by double digits.

This enrollment period during the coronavirus pandemic is an early test of President Joe Biden's strategy to use the Affordable Care Act as a springboard toward health coverage for all. Advancing on a parallel track, the new COVID-19 relief bill from House Democrats would offer a generous, though temporary, increase in subsidies for people covered by the law known as "Obamacare."

"It is a hugely important signaling move," said Katherine Hempstead of the nonpartisan Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "The administration is doing more than having open enrollment here, they're saying they want to make this coverage more affordable."

While policy experts like Hempstead are taking note, it's unclear how uninsured Americans will respond. Former President Barack Obama's health law has been on the books over a decade, but surveys consistently show that many people lacking job-based insurance do not realize they may qualify. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that about 33 million people are uninsured this year.

At Foundation Communities, an Austin, Texas, nonprofit that serves low-income working people, program director Kori Hattemer says she's seeing an uptick in interest. Although her agency had not started advertising, appointments for enrollment assistance booked up quickly. Volunteer counselors are being called back.

For clients, "it's their last chance probably to enroll in health insurance for 2021," Hattemer said.

One is Jacklindy Barradez, a housekeeper and restaurant worker unemployed since the start of the pandemic. Her husband hung on to his maintenance job, but the couple and their two children are uninsured. Barradez said a friend told her about the health law and she intends to follow through.

With no health insurance as the pandemic stretches into its second year, Barradez is uneasy. "We are not exempt from having something happen to us," she said in Spanish, her first language. "Not having the means to respond is extremely worrisome."

The Biden administration is going the extra mile to try to sign up people such as Barradez.

HealthCare.gov will be accepting applications through May 15, a period about twice as long as annual open enrollment. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which runs the program, has a $50 million advertising budget, five times what the Trump administration would spend on annual open enrollment. Under Biden, there will be a special emphasis on reaching Black and Latino communities that have borne a heavy burden from COVID-19.

Business owners ponder whether to require COVID-19 shots

NEW YORK (AP)—As more coronavirus vaccine doses become available in the weeks and months ahead, many business owners face a difficult decision: whether to require employees to be inoculated.

And if they decide "yes," they have to be ready for the possibility that some staffers will refuse.

Dentist Andrew Geller initially didn't feel comfortable with requiring his staff to get the shots because of the many unknowns about the vaccine. But he did extensive research and concluded that the 23 employees at Geller Family Dental should be vaccinated. Turns out most were grateful that as health workers they could receive the vaccine when it first arrived.

However, Geller did have more difficult conversations with a handful of employees who were uneasy about getting the shots.

"I did my best to ensure them that this was going to maintain the health and safety of their families. It took a little bit longer for some to make an appointment, but they did, thankfully," says Geller, whose practice is located in Bronxville, New York.

State governments determine who can be vaccinated and when; in most states, priority has been given to health workers, first responders and older people, but employees of some businesses—for example, restaurant workers in New York—are eligible. The general population isn't expected to be vaccinated until the spring at the earliest, so most business owners still must decide what their policy on vaccinations will be.

It's not known how many employers will require staffers to get the vaccine—and many companies likely haven't made a decision. About two-thirds of Americans say they plan to get vaccinated or have already done so, according to a poll released Wednesday by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey also found that 15% of Americans say they will definitely not get the vaccine and another 17% say they probably will not.

Employers can require many staffers to be vaccinated under guidelines from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. They can't require inoculations for employees with medical conditions protected by the Americans with Disability Act or those who object to vaccinations for religious reasons. The ADA covers employers with 15 or more workers, and some state and municipal laws cover smaller businesses. Owners must find what the law calls a reasonable accommodation to allow these staffers to keep working. One example during the pandemic would be an assignment that could be done in a space a safe distance from co-workers or customers.

Employers have been contacting attorneys and human resources consultants and asking, what should we do?

"We are having some very honest and real conversations with clients to make sure it's the right decision for them," says Fernanda Anzek, a consultant with the human resources provider Insperity.

A frequently asked question is whether an employer can dismiss a staffer who refuses to be vaccinated and who isn't protected by law. The short answer is yes.

"The employer has the latitude under the EEOC to keep the workplace safe," says Jerry Maatman, an employment law attorney with Seyfarth Shaw in Chicago. But Maatman cautions that while the EEOC has released guidelines about the vaccine, issues over employers' rights to dismiss staffers who don't comply are likely to end up in court.

Nation

Impeachment isn't the final word on Capitol riot for Trump

AP

In this image from video, Bruce Castor, an attorney for former President Donald Trump, speaks after the Senate reached a deal to skip witness testimony during the second impeachment trial of Trump in the Senate at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2021.

WASHINGTON (AP)—Donald Trump's acquittal at his second impeachment trial may not be the final word on whether he's to blame for the deadly Capitol riot. The next step for the former president could be the courts.

Now a private citizen, Trump is stripped of his protection from legal liability that the presidency gave him. That change in status is something that even Republicans who voted on Saturday to acquit of inciting the Jan. 6 attack are stressing as they urge Americans to move on from impeachment.

"President Trump is still liable for everything he did while he was in office, as an ordinary citizen, unless the statute of limitations has run," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said after that vote. He insisted that the courts were a more appropriate venue to hold Trump accountable than a Senate trial.

"He didn't get away with anything yet," McConnell said. "Yet."

The insurrection at the Capitol, in which five people died, is just one of the legal cases shadowing Trump in the months after he was voted out of office. He also faces legal exposure in Georgia over an alleged pressure campaign on state election officials, and in Manhattan over hush-money payments and business deals.

But Trump's culpability under the law for inciting the riot is by no means clear-cut. The standard is high under court decisions reaching back 50 years. Trump could also be sued by victims, though he has some constitutional protections, including if he acted while carrying out the duties of president. Those cases would come down to his intent.

Legal scholars say a proper criminal investigation takes time, and there are at least five years on the statute of limitations to bring a federal case. New evidence is emerging every day.

"They're way too early in their investigation to know," said Laurie Levenson, a law professor at Loyola Law School and former federal prosecutor. "The have arrested 200 people, they're pursuing hundreds more, all of those people could be potential witnesses because some have said 'Trump made me do it'."

What's not known, she said, is what Trump was doing during the time of the riot, and that could be the key. Impeachment didn't produce many answers. But federal investigators in a criminal inquiry have much more power to compel evidence through grand jury subpoenas.

"It's not an easy case, but that's only because what we know now, and that can change," Levenson said.

The legal issue is whether Trump or any of the speakers at the rally near the White House that preceded the assault on the Capitol incited violence and whether they knew their words would have that effect. That's the standard the Supreme Court laid out in its 1969 decision in Brandenburg v. Ohio, which overturned the conviction of a Ku Klux Klan leader.

Trump urged the crowd on Jan. 6 to march on the Capitol, where Congress was meeting to affirm Joe Biden's presidential election, Trump even promised to go with his supporters, though he didn't in the end. "You'll never take our country back with weakness," Trump said.

He also had spent weeks spinning up supporters over his increasingly combative language and false election claims urging them to "stop the steal."

Trump's impeachment lawyers said he didn't do anything illegal. Trump, in a statement after the acquittal, did not admit to any wrongdoing.

Federal prosecutors have said they are looking at all angles of the assault on the Capitol and whether the violence had been incited. The attorney general for the District of Columbia, Karl Racine, has said that district prosecutors are considering whether to charge Trump under local law that criminalizes statements that motivate people to violence.

"Let it be known that the office of attorney general has a potential charge that it may utilize," Racine told MSNBC last month. The charge would be a misdemeanor with a maximum sentence of six months in jail.

Trump's top White House lawyer repeatedly warned Trump on Jan. 6 that he could be held liable. That message was delivered in part to prompt Trump to condemn the violence that was carried out in his name and acknowledge that he would leave office Jan. 20, when Biden was inaugurated. He did depart the White House that day.

On Parkland anniversary, Biden calls for tougher gun laws

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP)—Sorrow reverberated across the country Sunday as Americans, including President Joe Biden, joined a Florida community in remembering the 17 lives lost three years ago in the Parkland school shooting massacre.

"In seconds, the lives of dozens of families, and the life of an American community, were changed forever," Biden said in a statement released Sunday.

The president used the occasion to call on Congress to strengthen gun laws, including requiring background checks on all gun sales and banning assault weapons.

There was no time to wait, the president said. "We owe it to all those we've lost and to all those left behind to grieve to make a change. The time to act is now."

Gov. Ron DeSantis ordered flags be lowered to half staff from sunrise to sunset across the state to honor those who perished when a former student of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School opened fire on campus with an AR-15 rifle on Valentines Day in 2018.

When the gunfire ended, 14 students and three staff members were dead, and 17 others were wounded. The suspect, Nikolas Cruz, is still awaiting trial.

In his proclamation for a day of remembrance, DeSantis asked fellow Floridians to pause for a moment of silence at 3 p.m. Sunday.

"The Parkland community is resilient in the wake of tragedy, reminding us just how strong and united Floridians can be in the face of such devastating loss," the governor said in his proclamation.

The Republican governor also noted some of the school safety measures enacted since the tragedy three years ago, including money to install panic alert systems at schools across the state and to strengthen programs meant to prevent violence before they occur.

The panic alert measure was dubbed "Alyssa's Law," in honor of 14-year-old Alyssa Alhadeff, one of the students killed three years ago.

Parkland parents have been divided over how lawmakers should respond.

Ryan Petty, whose daughter Alaina was 14 when she was killed in the shooting, addressed the president in a tweet Sunday.

"Mr. President, thank you for remembering the loved ones taken from us 3 years ago," he wrote. "Alaina loved this country and the freedoms it guarantees. Common sense tells us that honoring her life does not require infringement on the rights of law-abiding citizens."

In an interview Sunday, Petty said the president's proposals won't prevent more tragedies.

"It's wrong to focus on the weapon," said Petty, who is now a member of the state school board. "For those who understand what happened that day, there were mistakes. This was the most preventable school shooting in the history of our country. The warning signs were there. It was clear the killer had intentions to attack the school."

Petty remembered his daughter as a friend to everyone, and recounted how important community service was to her.

"For those of us who lost loved ones that day, it's pretty much like any other day. We miss them. There's nothing we can do to bring them back. The only thing we can do is move forward and try to honor their memories and make sure this doesn't happen to any other families," he said.

Trump looks to reassert himself after impeachment acquittal

WASHINGTON (AP)—Donald Trump took in the win at Mar-a-Lago, surrounded by friends and family. His lawyers celebrated with hugs and smiles. One joked, "We're going to Disney World!"

Now acquitted in his second Senate impeachment trial, Trump is preparing for the next phase of his post-presidency life. Feeling emboldened by the trial's outcome, he is expected to reemerge from a self-imposed hibernation at his club in Palm Beach, Florida, and is eyeing ways to reassert his power.

But after being barred from Twitter, the former president lacks the social media bullhorn that fueled his political rise. And he's confronting a Republican Party deeply divided over the legacy of his jarring final days in office, culminating in the Jan. 6 storming of the Capitol. Searing video images of the day played on loop during his impeachment trial, which ended Saturday.

Trump remains popular among the GOP base, but many Republicans in Washington have cooled to him. Never before have so many members of a president's party—seven GOP senators, in his case—voted for his removal in a Senate trial.

Some may work to counter efforts by Trump to support extreme candidates in next year's congressional primaries.

Undeterred, friends and allies expect Trump to resume friendly media interviews after weeks of silence. He has met with political aides to discuss efforts to help Republicans try to take control of the House and Senate in the 2022 midterms elections. He remains fixated on exacting revenge on Republicans who supported his impeachment or resisted his efforts to overturn the results of the November election won by Democrat Joe Biden.

"I imagine you'll probably be hearing a lot more from him in the coming days," senior adviser Jason Miller said.

In a statement after the vote, Trump offered few clues, but was defiant as he told supporters their movement "has only just begun."

"In the months ahead I have much to share with you, and I look forward to continuing our incredible journey together to achieve American greatness for all of our people," he said.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, who spoke with Trump on Saturday night, acknowledged that Trump is "mad at some folks," but also "ready to move on and rebuild the Republican Party" and "excited about 2022."

Asia

Thousands of people attend a concert by the band Six60 on Saturday, Feb. 13, 2021, in Wellington, New Zealand. AP

AFTER VIRUS FOUND

Auckland enters 3-day lockdown

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP)—New Zealand's largest city of Auckland has begun a three-day lockdown following the discovery of three unexplained coronavirus cases in the community.

Health officials said Monday the cases were of the more contagious variant first found in Britain and that genome testing hadn't linked them to any previous known cases.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced the lockdown after an urgent meeting with other top lawmakers in the Cabinet. She said they decided to take a cautious approach until they find out more about the outbreak.

The lockdown, which extends through Wednesday, is the first in New Zealand in six months and represents a significant setback in the nation's largely successful efforts to control the virus. It has also forced a delay in the America's Cup sailing regatta.

New Zealand had successfully stamped out community spread, and many people elsewhere in the world looked on in envy as New Zealanders went back to work and began attending concerts and sporting events without the need to wear masks or take other precautions.

Indeed, Ardern on Sunday had planned to attend the Big Gay Out, an Auckland festival that celebrates the rainbow community and attracts tens of thousands of people. She ended up canceling those plans and returning to Wellington to manage the outbreak.

"I'm asking New Zealanders to continue to be strong and to be kind," Ardern said at a hastily arranged press conference. "I know we all feel the same way when this happens. We all get that sense of 'Not again.' But remember, we have been here before and that means we know how to get out of this again, and that is together."

New Zealand's greatest vulnerability has been at the border.

New cases are regularly caught among returning travelers, all of whom are required to spend two weeks in quarantine. Despite precautions, there have been several times when the virus has leaked out from the border before being controlled again, and officials are trying to determine whether that's happened again.

In the latest case, an Auckland mother, father and daughter caught the disease. Officials said the mother works at a catering company that does laundry for airlines, and officials are investigating whether there is a link to infected passengers. Officials said the woman hadn't been going aboard the planes herself.

The rest of New Zealand outside of Auckland has also had restrictions imposed, including limiting crowd sizes to 100.

"We are gathering all of the facts as quickly as we can, and the system that served us so well in the past is really gearing up to do so again," said COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins.

He described the cases as new and active.

"New Zealand has kept COVID-19 contained better than almost any other country," Hipkins said. "But as we have kept saying, there is no such thing as no risk."

Japan formally approves its first COVID-19 vaccine

TOKYO (AP)—Japan on Sunday formally approved its first COVID-19 vaccine and said it would start nationwide inoculations within days, but months behind the U.S. and many other countries.

Japan's health ministry said it had approved the vaccine co-developed and supplied by Pfizer Inc.

The announcement comes after a government panel on Friday confirmed that final results of clinical testing done in Japan showed that the vaccine had an efficacy similar to what overseas tests showed.

Many countries began vaccinating their citizens late last year, and Pfizer's vaccine has been used elsewhere since December.

Under the current plan, about 20,000 front-line medical workers at hospitals in Japan will get their first shots beginning around Wednesday. About 3.7 million other medical workers will be next, followed by elderly people, who are expected to get their shots in April. By June, it's expected that all others will be eligible.

Health ministry official Yuta Yamashita said inoculations can start as soon as a ministry panel on vaccination logistics gives the go-ahead.

The approval was granted in a special fast-track process for emergency use. It took two months compared to the usual one year in a country known for cautious and slow-moving approval processes.

Still, the rollout in Japan is months behind many other countries because the government had asked for clinical testing at home in addition to the multinational tests Pfizer conducted on more than 40,000 people from July to November. Many countries accepted Pfizer's results and moved ahead.

World

Pro-Navalny protests light up Russian cities

MOSCOW (AP)—Supporters of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny came out to residential courtyards and shined their cellphone flashlights Sunday in a display of unity, despite efforts by Russian authorities to extinguish the illuminated protests.

Navalny's team sent photos of small groups with lit-up cellphones in cities from Siberia to the Moscow region. It was unclear how many people participated overall.

No arrests were immediately reported. However, police detained nine people at a daytime demonstration in the city of Kazan calling for the release of political prisoners, according to OVD-Info, a human rights group that monitors political arrests.

The group said security guards at Moscow State University recorded the names of people leaving a dormitory to take part in a flashlight rally there.

When Navalny's first team urged people to come out to the cellphone protests, many responded with jokes and skepticism. After two weekends of nationwide demonstrations, the new protest format looked to some like a retreat.

Yet Russian officials spent days trying to blacken the protests. Officials accused Navalny's allies of acting on NATO's instructions. Kremlin-backed TV channels warned that flashlight rallies were part of major uprisings around the world. State news agencies cited unnamed sources as saying a terrorist group was plotting attacks during unapproved mass protests.

The suppression attempts represent a change of tactics for Russian authorities, who used ignore Navalny.

Kremlin-controlled TV channels used to not report about protests called by Navalny. Russian President Vladimir Putin has never mentioned his most prominent critic by name. State news agencies referred to the anti-corruption investigator as "a blogger" in the rare stories when they did mentioning him.

"Navalny went from a person whose name is not allowed to be mentioned to the main subject of discussion" on state TV, said Maria Pevchikh, head of investigations at Navalny's Foundations for Fighting Corruption.

Pevchikh credited Navalny's latest expose for the sudden surge in attention. His foundation's two-hour video alleging that a lavish palace on Black Sea was built for Putin through corruption has been watched over 111 million times on YouTube since Jan. 19.

The video went up two days after Navalny was arrested upon returning to Russia from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from a nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin. The Russian government denies involvement and claims it has no evidence that Navalny was poisoned.

While the high-profile arrest and the subsequent expose were a double blow to authorities, political analyst and former Kremlin speech writer Abbas Gallyamov says that keeping Navalny and his protests off the airwaves to deprive him of additional publicity no longer makes sense.

"The fact that this strategy has changed suggests that the pro-government television audience is somehow receiving information about Navalny's activities through other channels, recognizes him, is interested in his work, and in this sense, keeping the silence doesn't make any sense," Gallyamov said.

The weekend protests in scores of Russian cities last month over Navalny's detention represented the largest outpouring of popular discontent in years and appeared to have rattled the Kremlin. Police reportedly arrested about 10,000 people, and many demonstrators were beaten, while state media sought to downplay the scale of the protests.

TV channels aired footage of empty squares in cities where protests were announced and claimed that few people showed up.

Separatists grow majority in Catalonia despite Socialist win

BARCELONA, Spain (AP)—The pro-union Socialist Party claimed a narrow win in regional elections in Catalonia late Sunday, but the bloc of parties supporting secession by Spain's northeastern corner widened their control of the regional parliament.

With 99% of the votes counted, the three main parties pledging to carve out an independent Catalan state increased their number of seats in the regional parliament to 74. In 2017, those same parties won 70 seats of the 135-seat chamber, just two above the majority.

The Socialist party led by former health minister Salvador Illa was poised to take 33 seats with over 625,000 votes. The pro-secession Republican Left of Catalonia was also set to claim 33 seats, but with 580,000 votes.

Despite the huge boost in support for the Socialist Party of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who has held talks with the separatists in an attempt to ease tensions with the region, Illa will have a difficult time trying to cobbling together support for a government. He would need the support of several parties, including some separatists.

"This is a clear victory that has one reading: It is time to turn the page, to write a new chapter, to reach out to one another and advance together," Illa said after his victory.

The outcome confirms that pro-separatist sentiment has not waned despite the collective suffering of the COVID-19 pandemic and a frustrated secession bid in October 2017 that left several of its members in prison. Four years on, the wealthy region that has its own language spoken alongside Spanish remains divided down the middle by the secession question.

However, it was not clear if the separatist parties would be able to overcome the in-fighting that has plagued their bloc since the dream of an easy breakaway from Spain proved elusive.

The results shifted the power within the pro-secession camp to the leftist Republican Left of Catalonia party, whose 33 seats edged out the center-right Together for Catalonia, set to win 32 seats.

The Republican Left of Catalonia of jailed leader Oriol Junqueras can now dispute the leadership of the bloc with Together for Catalonia, the party of former Catalan chief Carles Puigdemont, who fled to Belgium following the ineffective 2017 breakaway bid.

Together for Catalonia maintains a more radical stance on severing ties from Spain in the short term, while the Republican Left of Catalonia lowered its tone over the past year and set winning an amnesty from central authorities for Junqueras and other jailed leaders as its top priority—for now.

Overdrive

2021 Ford Ranger Lariat Tremor midsize pickup. MARK PHELAN/DETROIT FREE PRESS/TNS

AUTO REVIEW:

2021 Ford Ranger Tremor pickup delivers off-road performance and value

By MARK PHELAN
DETROIT FREE PRESS

The off-road trails will be a bit more crowded this spring, because the 2021 Ford Ranger Tremor pickup is about to hit the road.

Boasting more ride height, Fox off-road shocks and more, the Ranger is Ford's answer to off-road pickup models like the Chevrolet Colorado ZR2, Jeep Gladiator Mojave, Nissan Frontier Pro-4X and Toyota Tacoma TRD Pro.

The Ranger Tremor's claim to space in that crowded market stems from a lower base price than competitors and features like:

- 17-inch magnetic gray painted aluminum wheels
- 32-inch General Grabber A/TX all-terrain tires
- 9.7 inches of ground clearance
- Electronic locking rear differential
- Fox off-road shocks
- 10-speed automatic transmission
- 7,500-pound towing capacity
- 1,430-pound payload
- Hoop steps for easy access
- Seats with contrast stitching and suede inserts

"Tremor" is a package of features. It costs $4,290, and is available on XLT and Lariat models. That means Ranger Tremor prices start around $40,000. That's a couple of thousand dollars lower than competing midsize pickups' off-road models.

I tested a nicely equipped Ranger Lariat Tremor. Base price was $38,785 and $46,165 as equipped. All prices exclude destination charges.

Ford already offers Tremor versions of its larger F-150 and SuperDuty pickups. The name's only been around for a couple of years, but has a strong following.

Driving impressions

I recently took my Tremor to Holly Oaks off-road vehicle park north of Detroit on a windy, snowy and bitterly cold day. It proved more than capable of climbing steep, icy hills, slaloming through hillside snow and delivering quiet, comfortable operation on highways and surface streets.

The Ranger Tremor's smooth quiet on-road performance is unusual for a truck with off-road tires, but the 32-inch all-terrain Generals don't make much of a ruckus on pavement. Wind noise is also manageable, despite the pickup's increased ground clearance—more room for wind to swirl and whistle at highway speed.

The standard 2.3L turbocharged four-cylinder engine produces 270 horsepower and 310 pound-feet of torque. Torque output is highest of any gasoline engine in the segment, though it trails the Chevy Colorado ZR2 diesel substantially. Horsepower is lower than the other gasoline engines, but the quick-shifting 10-speed automatic—two more gears than anything else in the segment—offsets the disadvantage. Highway acceleration and cruising power are more than adequate.

The Ranger Tremor's standard four-wheel drive system has a four position terrain management system for different surfaces and levels of traction, and Trail Control, which lets the driver program in speed so they can focus on avoiding obstacles and choosing the best route.

Frame-mounted front and rear recovery hooks are standard, in case you get in over your head despite the Ranger's capability.

That capability was evident on slick, snowy hills at the off-road park. The 4WD's snow setting navigated most slopes with ease. Shifting to the low range of gears handled the slickest, steepest spots.

Comfortable, roomy interior

The Ranger Tremor is only available with a four-door, five passenger cab. The front seat is spacious, with an accommodating center console and easy to use touch screen. The rear bench seat has good leg and head room. Leather upholstery with suede inserts, accent stitching and a Tremor logo are standard.

Heavy duty rubber floor mats come standard.

Towing capacity and payload—the weight a pickup can carry in its bed and cab—are unchanged from other Rangers, giving the Tremor an advantage over most competitors over how much gear it can carry. It measures 210.8 inches long and has a 61-inch bed.

A revised suspension with Fox off-road shocks provides a smooth ride on the highway and plenty of travel and damping off-road.

Standard safety features:

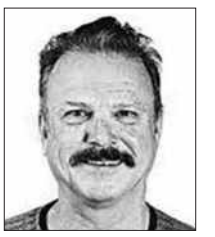
- Lane-keeping, automatic high beams
- Blind spot and cross traffic alerts
- Pre-collision assist with automatic emergency braking

Other available features:

- Adaptive cruise control
- Forward and reverse parking sensors
- Keypad entry
- Pushbutton start
- Remote start
- LED head and tail lights
- Wiper-activated headlights
- Trailer sway control
- B&O audio
- Navigation

Ethanol-free gas

MOTORMOUTH



By BOB WEBER
Tribune News Service

Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. He maintains this status by seeking certification every five years. Weber's work appears in professional trade magazines and other consumer publications. His writing also appears in automotive trade publications, Consumer Guide and Consumers Digest. Send questions along with name and town to motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.

Q: Ethanol-free gasoline is available where I live, but at added cost. I have a car that I store over the winter and I fill it with ethanol-free, since I've heard that the ethanol in gas can break down quickly. Is there any benefit to using ethanol-free in my daily drivers, a 2019 BMW X3 and a 2014 BMW 335? While we don't go through gas these days as quickly as we did pre-pandemic, we still refill these daily drivers at least every month to six weeks.

—J.B., Minneapolis

A: Ethanol-free gasoline is a good idea for storing a car. Adding some fuel stabilizer is also helpful. Using pure gasoline generally provides up to five percent better fuel economy. It is what the EPA uses to establish those fuel economy ratings and why you seldom get the stated fuel economy on the sticker. Is it worth the higher price? You decide.

Q: Which grade of gasoline would be best for storing my 18-year-old, carbureted Suzuki motorcycle? The owner's manual says to use regular grade gasoline for everyday riding. When I store my motorcycle in the heated parking garage, I use both Sta-Bil and premium gas. In the spring the next tank of gas is premium, and from then on, either regular or mid-grade gas. A motorcycle mechanic friend says I overservice my bike.

—D.W., Chicago

A: In my opinion, you aren't over-maintaining a vehicle unless you wear out the threads on the oil drain plug. Lack of adequate service, on the other hand, is asking for trouble. But you are probably wasting your money for premium gas during storage.

Q: The battery in my motorcycle seemed to be getting a bit weak, so I ordered a new one online. It came with the sulfuric acid pre-measured and packaged separately in a special plastic sleeve. If I wait until the battery already in the bike gets weaker, will I shorten the life of the new battery as long as I don't add the acid?

—B.H., Colorado Springs, Colo.

A: Your new dry battery can wait until spring. Prior to the advent of maintenance-free batteries, all were shipped dry. They would keep almost indefinitely on the storage shelf of the shop or service station. Prior to installation, the cells would be filled with acid and the battery would be charged. If the mechanic was careless, burns were common.

Q: Next fall I'm going to be in the market for new tires. In the past the dealers have suggested replacing or rebuilding the tire pressure monitors. I have replaced them. Do you recommend replacing them, or rebuilding them? It seems to me one dealer said they could be rebuilt.

—G.K., Maple Grove, Minn.

A: Unless there is a problem with the TPM sensor, you need not replace it, but with age the rubber seal may deteriorate and the retaining nut may corrode. These parts are replaced during the rebuild and worth the money.

Q: A wheel that hasn't been removed for a long time can stick to a hub. I once had to get a tow for tire service that I could have otherwise performed myself. Is there a treatment that can be applied to prevent the sticking?

—J.P., Baldwin Twp., Minn.

A: I use anti-seize compound. A thin schmear around the edge of the wheel and where it contacts the hub will do the trick.

Life & Style

Duchess of Sussex expecting 2nd child, a sibling for Archie

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are expecting their second child, their office confirmed Sunday.

A spokesperson for Prince Harry, 36, and Meghan, 39, said in a statement: "We can confirm that Archie is going to be a big brother. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are overjoyed to be expecting their second child."

In a black-and-white photo of themselves, the couple sat near a tree with Harry's hand placed under Meghan's head as she lies on his lap with her hand resting on her bump.

The baby will be eighth in line to the British throne.

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said: "Her Majesty, Duke of Edinburgh, Prince of Wales and the entire family are delighted and wish them well."

The duke told chimpanzee expert Jane Goodall in 2019 that he would only have two children for the sake of the planet.

Goodall said: "Not too many," and Harry replied: "Two, maximum."

Harry and American actor Meghan Markle married at Windsor Castle in May 2018. Their son Archie was born a year later.

In early 2020, Meghan and Harry announced they were quitting royal duties and moving to North America, citing what they said were the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media. They recently bought a house in Santa Barbara, California.

In November, Meghan revealed that she had a miscarriage in July 2020, giving a personal account of the traumatic experience in hope of helping others.

A few days ago, the duchess won a privacy claim against a newspaper over the publication of a personal letter to her estranged father.

Britain's Prince Harry and Meghan arrive at the annual Endeavour Fund Awards in London, Thursday, March 5, 2020. AP

A giant complex geometric pattern formed from thousands of footsteps in the snow near to the capital Helsinki, in Espoo, Finland, Sunday Feb. 7, 2021. AP

Finns in snowshoes create temporary artwork on golf course

HELSINKI (AP)—An ephemeral artwork made with thousands of footsteps in the snow has captured attention near Finland's capital of Helsinki.

Under the guidance of local resident and amateur artist Janne Pyykko, 11 snowshoe-clad volunteers stamped a series of complex geometric patterns on a golf course. Together, the designs create a pattern with a starfish-resembling central figure surrounded by six huge snowflakes.

The artwork, which was completed over two days, measures about 160 meters (525 feet) in diameter. Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat said it could be the largest snow-drawing ever made in the Nordic country.

"It was both a social challenge and a visual challenge," Pyykko, who is inspired by visual effects and has earlier created smaller snow illustrations by himself, told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

With social challenge he referred to being able to inspire and lead the group to create the artwork that was based on strict geometrical design by computer as shown on a YouTube video posted by Pyykko.

At the site, the group used measuring and assisting strings to help to construct and maneuver the roundish figures.

Pyykko said "there is something in the human brain that likes the round form" and added that the drawing is best observed from the air. He noted that mapping out the patterns for snowshoers to follow within a set area of the Lofkulla golf course required a great deal of ground planning.

The work was designed to be temporary, lasting only until the next snowfall or heavy winds erase the footprints.

Police say Nicki Minaj's father killed by hit-and-run driver

MINEOLA, N.Y. (AP)—The 64-year-old father of rapper Nicki Minaj has died after being struck by a hit-and-run driver in New York, police said.

Robert Maraj was walking along a road in Mineola on Long Island at 6:15 p.m. Friday when he was hit by a car that kept going, Nassau County police said. Maraj was taken to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead Saturday. Police are asking any witnesses to the fatal crash to come forward.

Minaj, 38, was born Onika Tanya Maraj in Trinidad and was raised in the New York City borough of Queens. She has not made any public statement about her father's death.

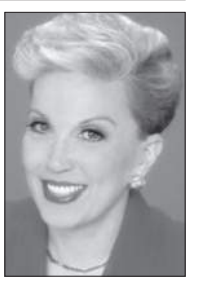
An email seeking comment was sent to a representative for Minaj.

Surprise revelation of twins' paternity is a family bombshell

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR ABBY: My son's new wife—who has a daughter—insisted that his two children are not biologically his. After a DNA test, it turns out she was right. They aren't. My son, my husband and I are heartbroken. His twins are 10, and they don't understand what's going on.

My husband and I are trying to gently remain in their lives with phone calls and limited visits. My son's wife refuses to visit with us until we stop communicating with the children, promise never to talk about them and display no pictures in our home. She's trying to convince our son to stop seeing us, as well. What to do?

DISAPPOINTED IN TEXAS

DEAR DISAPPOINTED: Those children, regardless of who their birth father is, were raised believing you and your husband are their grandparents. If you love them, do not knuckle under to your son's new wife or it will be only the beginning of how she will attempt to control you.

She does not have the right to dictate who you (or your son, for that matter) see and communicate with. She also does not have the right to order you to remove any object from your home.

If your son opts to turn his back on those children, that's a decision only he can make. If he also chooses to turn his back on you, then you raised a milquetoast instead of a man.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I'm a married man, and I love my wife. We're not living together at the moment due to unfortunate circumstances.

Being far away from her, I get extremely lonely. I have a co-worker who became a good friend, and I have feelings for her. I have told her how I feel, and we have hung out a few times—nothing sexual. Now she's moving away, and I feel heartbroken. How should I deal? I'm fighting back tears for someone I'm not even with. What do I do?

HEARTBROKEN IN THE EAST

DEAR HEARTBROKEN: A relationship does not have to be sexual to be meaningful, and your co-worker was filling a space in your life that was empty. That you feel a sense of loss and sadness that she is moving is not surprising.

Not knowing the unfortunate circumstances that caused the separation between you and your wife, I can only advise you to start looking for a way to mend fences or change those circumstances so you can live together again, because clearly, you're not doing well on your own. If that's not possible, start giving serious thought to how you plan to live the rest of your life, because this way isn't working.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: The other day I was on a video conference call with our boss and two colleagues. When "Joan" came on the call, "something" was hanging from one of her nostrils. She may have had a cold. I scratched my nose and mustache a few times, trying to alert her of what was happening, to no avail. She didn't react. No one else said anything.

What would the correct protocol have been? Should I have left it alone or was I right to try to let her know? I did what I would have done in person. Should I have privately texted her? Please advise.

TELECOMMUTING WOES

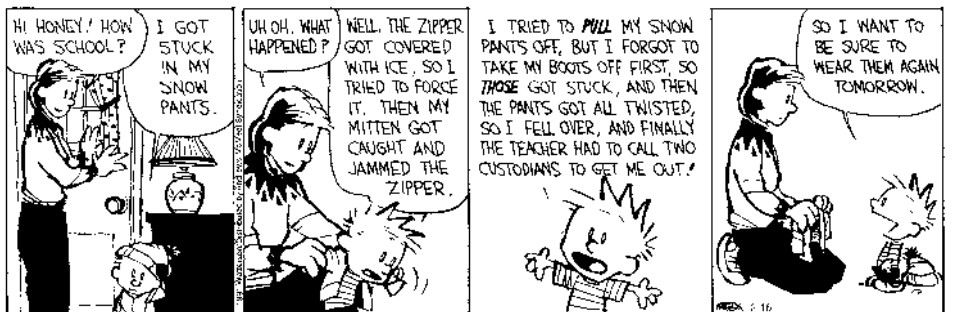
DEAR TELECOMMUTING: If the person with the leaky nose had been you, wouldn't you have wanted to know? Yes, you should have texted her.

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable—and most frequently requested—poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

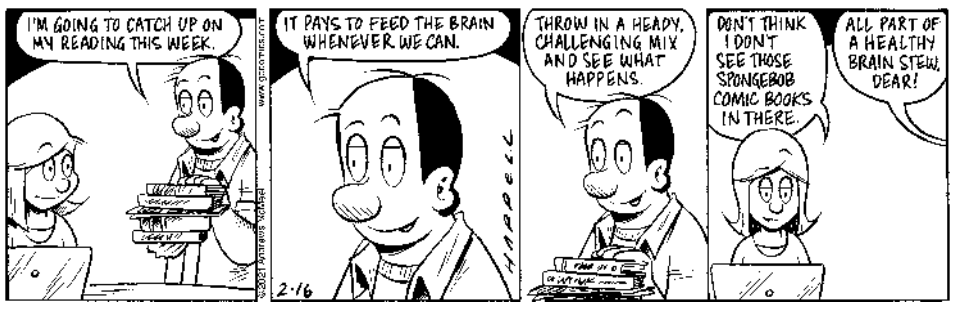

HI HONEY! HOW WAS SCHOOL?
I GOT STUCK IN MY SNOW PANTS.
UH OH. WHAT HAPPENED?
WELL, THE ZIPPER GOT COVERED WITH ICE. SO I TRIED TO FORCE IT. THEN MY MITTEN GOT CAUGHT AND JAMMED THE ZIPPER.
I TRIED TO PULL MY SNOW PANTS OFF, BUT I FORGOT TO TAKE MY BOOTS OFF FIRST, SO THOSE GOT STUCK, AND THEN THE PANTS GOT ALL TWISTED, SO I FELL OVER, AND FINALLY THE TEACHER HAD TO CALL TWO CUSTODIANS TO GET ME OUT!
SO I WANT TO BE SURE TO WEAR THEM AGAIN TOMORROW.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

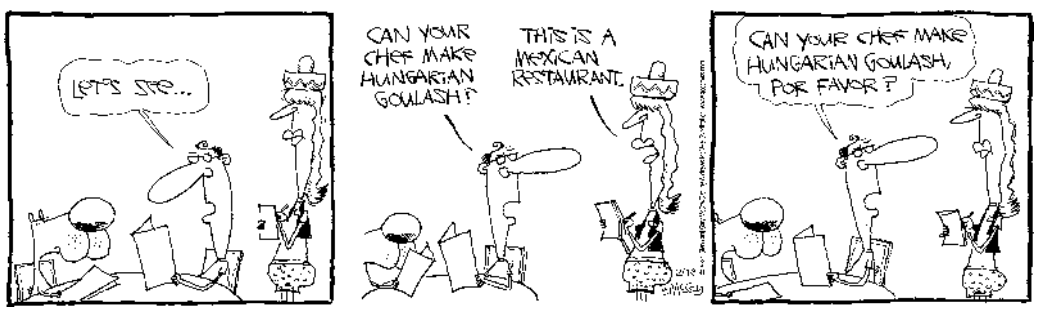
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


I'M GOING TO CATCH UP ON MY READING THIS WEEK.
IT PAYS TO FEED THE BRAIN WHENEVER WE CAN.
THROW IN A HEADY, CHALLENGING MIX AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS.
DON'T THINK I DON'T SEE THOSE SPONGEBOB COMIC BOOKS IN THERE.
ALL PART OF A HEALTHY BRAIN STEW, DEAR!
2-16

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


LET'S SEE...
CAN YOUR CHEF MAKE HUNGARIAN GOULASH?
THIS IS A MEXICAN RESTAURANT.
CAN YOUR CHEF MAKE HUNGARIAN GOULASH, POR FAVOR?

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

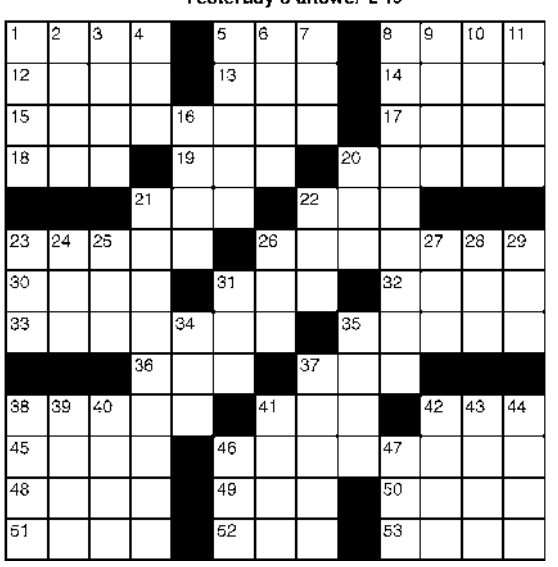
ACROSS
1 Asian desert
5 Roman 1051
8 Polynesian carving
12 Algerian port
13 Corn serving
14 Grand tale
15 Reply sassily
17 Hand (out)
18 Vintage
19 Whatever
20 Confuse
21 Stick with a kick
22 Bashful
23 Tripoli's land
26 Homage
30 Miles away
31 — chi
32 Historic periods
33 Mosque tower
35 Mountain chain
36 Bikini top
37 Cat's coat
38 Prima donnas
41 Glutton
42 Nabokov novel
45 Laundry appliance
46 Garbage collector
48 Hesitate
49 Squealer
50 Gambling city
51 Bygone fliers
52 Ambulance inits.
53 Men-only

DOWN
1 Attend
2 Verbal
3 Hardly hirsute
4 Squid squirt
5 Signified
6 Frilly
7 Annoy
8 Cuddly stuffed animal
9 Apple product
10 "Dressed to —"
11 Frozen drink brand
16 Eric of "Troy"
20 Sashimi fish
21 Host of "Dancing with the Stars"
22 — Lanka
23 Felon's flight
24 "— Were a Boy" (song by Beyoncé)
25 Prohibit
26 Body art, for short
27 Coffee vessel
28 Price point?
29 Jargon suffix
31 Darjeeling, e.g.
34 B&O and others
35 Carpets
37 Decrees
38 Firsties
39 Nest egg choices
40 Electric unit
41 Baby carriage
42 Help a crook
43 Delany or Carvey
44 Awe-struck
46 Three, in Rome
47 Day divs.

Solution time: 22 mins.

I	C	I			O	A	K		L	E	E	R
M	F	C	W		A	R	I		I	A	M	S
A	L	T	A		F	A	R		N	U	T	S
C	L	A	S	P		B	O	S	C			
			H	A	T		V	I	O	L	E	T
H	O	R		Z	O	N		P	L	U	M	E
I	R	A	N		T	B	D		N	A	I	L
K	A	N	G	A		C	O	M	P	U	T	E
E	L	I	T	E	S		T	R	E			
			O	R	C	A		S	N	I	P	S
L	E	G	N		A	V	A		N	C	A	A
A	V	I	D		L	E	N		Y	O	L	K
T	A	L	C		D	R	Y			N	E	E

Yesterday's answer 2-16



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Christina Ricci, 41; Darren Aronofsky, 52; Josh Brolin, 53; Arsenio Hall, 65.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: The Weeknd, 31; Elizabeth Olsen, 32; Ice-T, 63; Le-Var Burton, 64.

Happy Birthday: Make adjustments that encourage a better home life. A well-thought-out and organized household will help you reach your long-term goals. Negotiate with finesse when dealing with someone who can make a difference regarding your prospects. Stick to your plans, regardless of what others decide to do. Strive for stability and security; you'll attain peace of mind. Your numbers are 4, 12, 18, 22, 26, 32, 43.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Keep your eyes on your objective. It doesn't matter what everyone else is doing; what does matter is that you take care of your responsibilities and forge ahead relentlessly. You are only as good as your word. Live up to your promises. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Update a license, contract or personal identification. Don't take an unnecessary risk that may leave you in a precarious position at work or with an organization or group. Control your temper; the fallout will not be worthwhile. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* You stand to get ahead if you share your ideas and follow through with your plans. Be aware that someone will be eager to take credit for what you do; be prepared to prove otherwise. A partnership looks inviting and personal gain promising. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Put your creative imagination to the test at work, and you'll come up with a great idea that leads to a transformation. Education and preparation will help you take on a trendy challenge that leads to profits. Do more and spend less. ✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Do what's best for you. Help yourself instead of putting your time and effort into something that benefits someone else. Pledge to do your own thing and to work alongside people who have as much to offer as you. ✪✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Open your mind to change. Look for ways you can use your skills and knowledge to open a conversation that can lead to an exciting position. Don't sell yourself short. Have your resume fine-tuned and ready to go. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Be creative without overspending. Where there is a will, there is a way to overcome any obstacle that challenges you. Laziness and relying on others will be your downfalls. Pick up the slack by doing the work yourself. Romance is featured. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Use your charm, and you'll avoid getting into an argument. Listen attentively, and go about your business. The less fuss you make, the easier it will be to get things done your way. Take better care of your health and well-being. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* You'll spin heads with your outgoing, spirited nature. What you have to bring to the table will make others take notice. A romantic encounter will encourage you to spend more time nurturing a meaningful relationship. Self-improvement is encouraged. ✪✪✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Making a change will tempt you. Take precautions before you spend money. Refuse to buy into someone's plans. Don't settle for anything less than what you want. Hold out for a better deal, investment or suggestion. ✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Spend more time taking care of personal matters. How you handle domestic responsibilities will make a difference in the way others treat you. Be willing to compromise when faced with a dilemma. A kind gesture will help you get your way. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Keep your secrets to yourself. An emotional incident can affect your reputation and your chance to advance. Look inward, then make adjustments that will enhance your ability to reach your goal. Change the way you handle money, and prosperity will follow. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are compassionate, helpful and curious. You are changeable and assertive. ✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

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EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	9		4				7	
3				2		5		9
			5		1		3	
8		4				3		
	2			1			9	
		1				4		5
	8		9		3			
2		7		8				4
	5				6		1	

Difficulty Level ★★ 2/16

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

1	9	8	2	5	7	6	3	4
6	2	3	4	8	9	1	7	5
5	7	4	6	3	1	2	8	9
7	1	5	3	4	8	9	6	2
2	8	9	5	1	6	3	4	7
4	3	6	7	9	2	5	1	8
9	6	7	8	2	3	4	5	1
3	4	1	9	7	5	8	2	6
8	5	2	1	6	4	7	9	3

Difficulty Level ★

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

EXQUISITE FLAVORS OF ICE CREAM **Solution: 6 letters**

L	L	E	M	A	S	E	S	E	P	E	A	N	U	T
C	A	E	O	G	N	A	M	B	M	G	R	A	S	S
I	A	V	M	N	Y	I	E	O	E	A	R	T	A	G
N	O	U	E	A	L	R	M	C	H	O	T	E	E	I
I	D	Y	L	N	R	A	R	R	O	E	T	C	E	F
H	A	H	S	I	D	A	R	E	S	R	O	H	H	N
C	C	R	E	R	F	E	C	A	H	O	F	W	C	A
C	O	S	A	U	N	L	R	M	O	C	H	A	Y	C
U	V	C	D	M	O	F	O	I	E	R	O	L	L	U
Z	A	G	Ⓡ	O	B	S	F	W	E	S	N	N	L	S
E	E	Ⓐ	N	A	R	U	T	T	E	O	E	U	I	T
L	Ⓔ	J	N	R	U	A	T	E	C	R	Y	T	S	A
Ⓟ	E	A	C	H	O	U	N	A	E	E	I	A	A	R
P	N	V	E	G	B	C	B	G	N	B	O	C	B	D
A	P	A	P	A	Y	A	L	L	E	T	U	N	E	S

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Apple, Avocado, Bacon, Banana, Basil, Beets, Berries, Bourbon, Butter, Caramel, Cardamom, Cauliflower, Cayenne, Cherry, Corn, Cream, Custards, Dates, Figs, Foie, Fudge, Goat, Gras, Green, Hemp, Honey, Horseradish, Java, Lavender, Lime, Lychee, Mango, Matcha, Mocha, Nutella, Orange, Oreo, Papaya, Peach, Peanut, Pear, Rambutan, Rice, Sesame, Teas, Toast, Walnut, Zucchini

Yesterday's Answer: Ironing

To purchase **THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 47 through 61** order online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Nuggets rout Lakers, AD re-aggravates Achilles

AP
Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic, center, goes up to shoot over Los Angeles Lakers center Marc Gasol in the first half of an NBA game Sunday, Feb. 14, 2021, in Denver.

DENVER (AP)—Nikola Jokic recorded his sixth triple-double of the season and the Denver Nuggets beat Los Angeles 122-105 on Sunday night in a game where Lakers forward Anthony Davis hobbled from the court after re-aggravating his sore right Achilles.

Davis will have an MRI on Monday. He strained his Achilles late in the first half.

"I don't want to mess around with this type of injury," Davis said. "Just trying to figure out the best steps."

The spotlight was on the showdown between Jokic and LeBron James, who are both among the favorites in the NBA MVP race. Jokic finished with 23 points, 16 rebounds and 10 assists. James had 22 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists, but the Lakers' seven-game win streak ended.

Los Angeles never got back on track after Davis limped to the locker room. He was banged up when he tried to drive around Jokic with 2:39 left before halftime.

Davis hobbled to the free-throw line, made both and then was subbed out. He finished with 15 points and four rebounds in 14 minutes.

Entering the game, Davis was questionable with what was described as right Achilles tendinosis.

Trail Blazers 121, Mavericks 118

In Dallas, Damian Lillard hit a tiebreaking 3-pointer in the final minute, and the Portland Trail Blazers overcame another high-scoring outing from Luka Doncic.

The young Dallas sensation scored 44 points two nights after getting a career-high 46 in a victory over New Orleans, but it wasn't enough to extend the Mavericks' four-game winning streak, tied for their longest this season.

Lillard finished with 34 points and 11 assists.

Suns 109, Magic 90

In Phoenix, Devin Booker scored 27 points, Mikal Bridges added 21 and the Suns cruised to their sixth straight victory.

The Suns have won nine of their past 10 games and this one wasn't close. Phoenix never trailed and jumped out to a 14-2 lead after Orlando missed 12 of its first 13 shots.

It never got much better for the Magic, who had just eight players available because of injuries. Orlando has lost eight of its past 10 and fell to 10-18 for the season.

Pistons 123, Pelicans 112

In Detroit, Mason Plumlee had 17 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for his first career triple-double, and the Pistons spoiled Stan Van Gundy's return to Motown.

Van Gundy was the coach and president of basketball operations for the Pistons from 2014-18. He's coaching the Pelicans now, and Detroit became the latest team to blitz New Orleans from 3-point range.

The Pistons had six players with at least 15 points, and Detroit went 17 of 35 from beyond the arc—13 of 21 during the final three quarters.

Thunder 114, Bucks 109

In Oklahoma City, Justin Jackson scored a season-high 22 points and hit a critical 3-pointer in the final minute to help the Thunder overcome Giannis Antetokounmpo's triple-double.

With Milwaukee making a late push, Jackson hit a 3-pointer with 14.9 seconds remaining to put the Thunder in control for good in just his second start of the season.

Al Horford had 20 points, nine assists and seven rebounds for Oklahoma City, which played without leading scorer Shai Gilgeous-Alexander because of a sprained left knee.

Timberwolves 116, Raptors 112

In Tampa Bay, Karl-Anthony Towns scored seven of his 20 points late in the fourth quarter before fouling out, helping Minnesota snap a four-game losing streak.

Malik Beasley also scored 20 points for the Timberwolves, and Anthony Edwards finished with 18.

The Raptors had a chance to tie the game after Beasley stepped out of bounds with 12.1 seconds left for Minnesota's eighth turnover of the fourth quarter. But Pascal Siakam missed a layup that was contested by 6-foot-10 Jaden McDaniels. Jordan McLaughlin clinched the victory with two free throws with 3.7 seconds left.

Spurs 122, Hornets 110

In Charlotte, Dejounte Murray had 26 points and 12 rebounds, and the Spurs outlasted the short-handed Hornets.

Derrick White scored 12 of his season-high 25 points in the fourth quarter, helping San Antonio to its fifth win in six games.

Terry Rozier had 33 points for the Hornets, who played without leading scorer Gordon Hayward because of a sore back and P.J. Washington, Caleb Martin and Cody Martin due to health and safety protocols.

Wizards 104, Celtics 91

In Washington, Bradley Beal scored 35 points in his return from a rare night off, leading the Wizards to the victory.

Beal went 10 for 18 from the field and 11 for 11 at the free-throw line. Russell Westbrook had 13 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds for the Wizards. Rui Hachimura added 15 points.

Kemba Walker and Jalen Brown each scored 25 points for Boston.

Grizzlies 124, Kings 110

In Sacramento, Jonas Valanciunas scored a season-high 25 points and had 12 rebounds to offset a late technical foul and the Memphis Grizzlies beat the Kings.

Ja Morant added 16 points and 10 assists despite a rough 7-for-18 shooting night from the field. Dillon Brooks scored 22 points and Kyle Anderson had 17 points and six rebounds for Memphis, which had lost five of six.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic	W	L	PCT	GB
Philadelphia	18	9	.667	0.0
Brooklyn	16	12	.571	2.5
Boston	13	13	.500	4.5
New York	13	15	.464	5.5
Toronto	12	15	.444	6.0
Central				
Milwaukee	16	11	.593	0.0
Indiana	14	13	.519	2.0
Chicago	10	15	.400	5.0
Cleveland	10	18	.357	6.5
Detroit	8	19	.296	8.0
Southeast				
Charlotte	13	15	.464	0.0
Miami	11	15	.423	1.0
Atlanta	11	15	.423	1.0
Orlando	10	18	.357	3.0
Washington	7	17	.292	4.0

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Pacific	W	L	PCT	GB
LA Lakers	21	7	.750	0.0
LA Clippers	20	8	.714	1.0
Phoenix	17	9	.654	3.0
Golden State	14	13	.519	6.5
Sacramento	12	14	.462	8.0
Southwest				
San Antonio	16	11	.593	0.0
Memphis	11	11	.500	2.5
Dallas	13	15	.464	3.5
New Orleans	11	15	.423	4.5
Houston	11	15	.423	4.5
Northwest				
Utah	22	5	.815	0.0
Portland	16	10	.615	5.5
Denver	15	11	.577	6.5
Oklahoma City	11	15	.423	10.5
Minnesota	7	20	.259	15.0

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hurts, not Wentz will gather Eagles receivers for workouts

PHILADELPHIA—As the Eagles try to build leverage for a Carson Wentz trade, circumstances continue to make it harder for the Eagles to maximize the return on a quarterback whose contract they'd love to dump.

It was recently reported that "a group of the Eagles young receivers" plan to work out with quarterback Jalen Hurts in Texas, at some point in the next month.

No similar reports have surfaced regarding Wentz. Presumably, that's because Wentz still wants out and because momentum has pointed in the direction of a trade for a while now.

The process has become bogged down by the team's desire to get more than whatever has, or hasn't, been offered. Eagles great Ron Jaworski recently said that the Colts have offered only a pair of second-round picks. The Philadelphia Inquirer also has reported that no first-round picks have been put on the table.

The question becomes whether the Eagles will take the best deal they can get before a $10 million roster bonus becomes due on March 19, or whether they'll pay the money to Wentz and wait for a better offer to materialize later.

They've played the waiting game before and won. In 2016, the Eagles supposedly were ready to roll out Sam Bradford for Week One, with Wentz (then a rookie) on the bench. The Vikings lost Teddy Bridgewater not long before the season opener, and the Eagles quickly landed a first-round pick and a fourth-round pick for Bradford.

Serious quarterback injuries, especially in practice, are extremely rare, however. Even then, many teams are content to opt for the next man up than to pay a king's ransom for a plug-and-play replacement.

The Eagles also could wait for the outcome of the current quarterback carousel. Maybe a quarterback-needy team strikes out in free agency or the trade market, making that team interested in Wentz. Maybe a team that plans to address its needs in the draft fails to get the guy it wants.

However it plays out, the Eagles are playing a dangerous game of chess, checkers, and chicken. They want more than whatever they're being offered. To get more, they have to risk losing the offer(s) they already may have.

Ultimately, owner Jeffrey Lurie will have to be persuaded to write a $10 million check to Wentz as the seed money for an effort to attract a better bird than the one they currently hold in their hands. Given the very real chance that the money could end up being wasted, a team like the Colts needs simply to sit back and wait.

Maybe in the end the Eagles will let the roster-bonus deadline pass and pay the $10 million, if only to finagle a better trade package for Wentz. Indeed, it seems like the Eagles are as concerned (if not more concerned) with how the trade will look than they are in simply getting the best deal for Wentz that they can. ***(NBC)***

Nadal, Djokovic advance to quarterfinals

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Novak Djokovic wore tape above his right hip, and winced when he stretched for some shots in a three-hour match against Milos Raonic that will go into the records as his 300th win at a major.

For anyone curious about the severity of his injury, he put it into context after qualifying for the Australian Open quarterfinals for the 12th time.

"If it's any other tournament than a Grand Slam then I would retire, withdraw from the event, that's for sure," Djokovic said in an on-court TV interview Sunday following his 7-6 (4), 4-6, 6-1, 6-4 fourth-round victory. "When it warmed up it was fine. During the match it was kind of on and off."

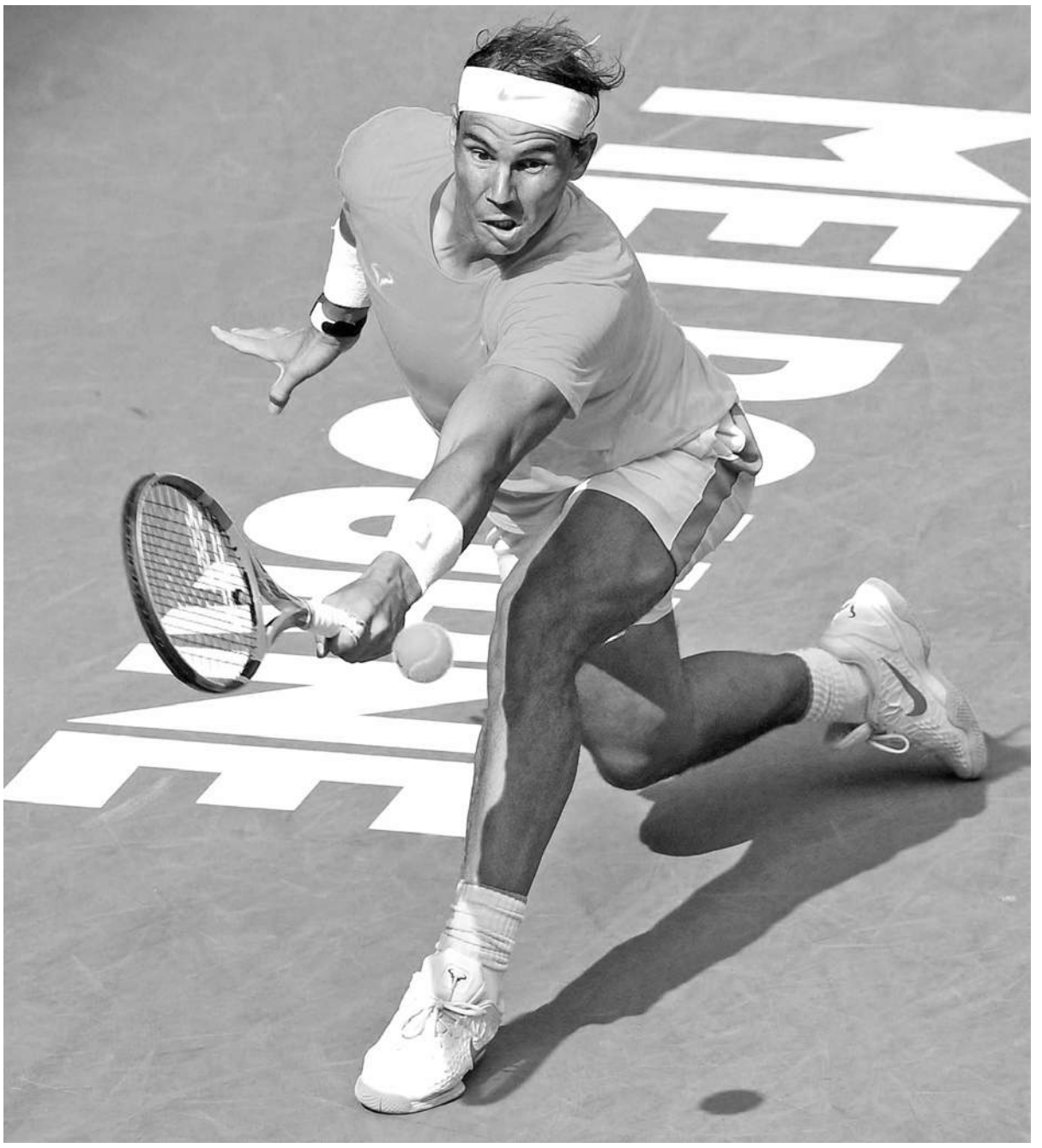
The eight-time Australian Open champion planned to spend most of the next two days recovering ahead of his quarterfinal against sixth-seeded Alexander Zverev.

That's pretty much how he spent his time after injuring an abdominal muscle in his five-set, third-round win over Taylor Fritz.

A lot of recovery, a lot of time getting physiotherapy and, he said, "different treatments with different devices. You know, just pills, painkillers and stuff like this with the medical team ... that definitely helped a lot."

He didn't practice on Saturday—he said he didn't hit a ball—and didn't know until he was warming up three hours before his match against Raonic whether or not he'd be fit enough to play Sunday's late match on Rod Laver Arena.

In the end, he looked OK as he extended his career streak to 12-0 against the big-serving Canadian. He dropped his racket and hurdled an advertising hoarding in the first set, and later watched on as 14th-seeded Raonic had his right ankle re-taped during a medical time out in the second.



AP

Spain's Rafael Nadal hits a backhand return to Italy's Fabio Fognini during their fourth round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Monday, Feb. 15, 2021.

His movement wasn't peak Djokovic, but it was good enough to produce 41 winners and drop only one of his 20 service games. His career win-loss record in the four tennis majors is now 300-45, making him the only man other than Roger Federer (362-59) to compile 300 wins.

"I won the match against a great player," Djokovic said, "and hopefully it's going to be even better in two days."

U.S. Open finalist Zverev beat No. 23-seeded Dusan Lajovic 6-4, 7-6 (5), 6-3 to move into the quarterfinals at Melbourne Park in back-to-back years.

The projected quarterfinal in that top section of the draw panned out according to the seedings.

This other quarterfinal match in that half of the draw is one that nobody saw coming.

With a straight-sets win over third-seeded Dominic Thiem, the U.S. Open champion and Australian Open runner-up in 2020, Grigor Dimitrov advanced to a showdown with Aslan Karatsev.

Yes, that Karatsev—the Russian ranked No. 114 who is playing in his first Grand Slam tournament. Dimitrov beating Thiem isn't exactly an upset.

Rafael Nadal put his old rival Fabio Fognini to the sword to reach the quarterfinals and move within three wins of the all-time Grand Slam titles record

The Spanish great was 1-1 with the flamboyant Italian in Grand Slams but he was never seriously troubled in his 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 win on Rod Laver Arena.

Nadal is now into his 43rd Grand Slam quarter-final, staying on course for a title match with eight-time winner Novak Djokovic who battled through an abdominal injury to reach the last eight on Sunday.

"I'm happy to be in the quarterfinals today—that means a lot to me, it's positive stuff," said Nadal, who is targeting a record 21st men's Grand Slam singles crown.

The Melbourne tournament remained fan-free for a third day on Monday during a five-day lockdown in Victoria state to curb a coronavirus outbreak.

As the action continued in front of empty stands, unseeded American Jessica Pegula reached her maiden Grand Slam quarter-final with victory over Elina Svitolina, her first over a Top 10 player.

Pegula, whose billionaire father owns the Buffalo Bills NFL team, overcame fifth seed Svitolina 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 to set up a meeting with fellow American Jennifer Brady, a 6-1, 7-5 winner against Croatia's Donna Vekic.

Spring training '21: New year, but COVID-19 protocols remain

NEW YORK (AP)—Completing the 2020 season required MLB to rewrite its rule book. Stadiums were emptied, schedules rewritten. Some players opted out. The ones that didn't spat into COVID-19 testing cups until their mouths went dry.

"When it was all said and done, you kind of look back and go, 'God, that was the longest 60 games I've ever been a part of," veteran pitcher Jon Lester said last month.

Well, to borrow from another Chicago Cubs favorite:

Let's play 162!

Against the backdrop of a still dangerous coronavirus pandemic, pitchers and catchers are reporting to spring training this week, the first step in a 2021 season that will take many of the complexities from 2020's 60-game sprint and stretch them over an additional four months.

Sure, there's the usual buzz over players with new homes. Blake Snell and Yu Darvish, hoping to push the upstart San Diego Padres over the top. Still in their way, the World Series champion Los Angeles Dodgers, who upgraded with NL Cy Young Award winner Trevor Bauer. Francisco Lindor is a Met, Nolan Arenado a Cardinal, and George Springer and Marcus Semien have joined up on the Blue Jays.

This season, though, promises to again be defined by the pandemic.

Offers by MLB to delay opening day were rejected by the players' association last month, defaulting the league into an on-time start.

Baseball will again use seven-inning doubleheaders and runners on second base to start extra innings—experiments introduced during last year's condensed regular season to ease the burden on pitchers amid a flood of postponements prompted by positive tests and contact tracing.

Sunflower seeds are still outlawed, and high-fives frowned upon, too. Although limited-capacity crowds are expected at many stadiums, autographs will remain a no-no.

Other 2020 changes have been put on the bench. The universal designated hitter is gone, and no deal has been reached to re-expand the postseason. Of course, last year's agreement to fatten the playoff field from 10 to 16 teams wasn't finished until hours before the first pitch on opening day, so there's precedent for a late change.

Then again, the league and union have agreed on little lately—hardly a promising sign with the collective bargaining agreement set to expire Dec. 1. Expect chatter about that this spring, too.

Scheduling figures to remain a headache. There were 45 games postponed for coronavirus-related reasons last year, and all but two were made up.

Players will again be tested 3-4 times per week for COVID-19 and heavily restricted in what they can do during their time off. Lester, signed by Washington as a free agent in January after six seasons with the Cubs, compared the exhaustion of last year's protocols to a deep playoff run.

"Mentally, you don't realize how draining it is until you're done," he said. "I think last year was that. It was two months of that mental grind of the testing, worrying about the testing, making sure you're doing all the right things."

And now it's time to start all over, beginning soon in Clearwater, Tempe and all the familiar camp sites.

Spring rosters will be limited to 75 players, with minor league camps delayed until the big leaguers leave town for opening day April 1. For fans accustomed to exploring the backfields, there won't be much to see.

The good news for all involved—spread of the virus has slowed near camps. Arizona has dropped from a peak of nearly 14,000 cases in one day to under 2,000, while Florida went from a high of 19,000 cases to under 8,000.

Still, MLB has adopted extra spring precautions. The Grapefruit League schedule was reworked to limit travel, and clubs won't play exhibitions against local colleges — usually a spring staple. Some early games may be shortened to five or seven innings, and half-innings can be called off before three outs if a pitcher has thrown at least 20 pitches.

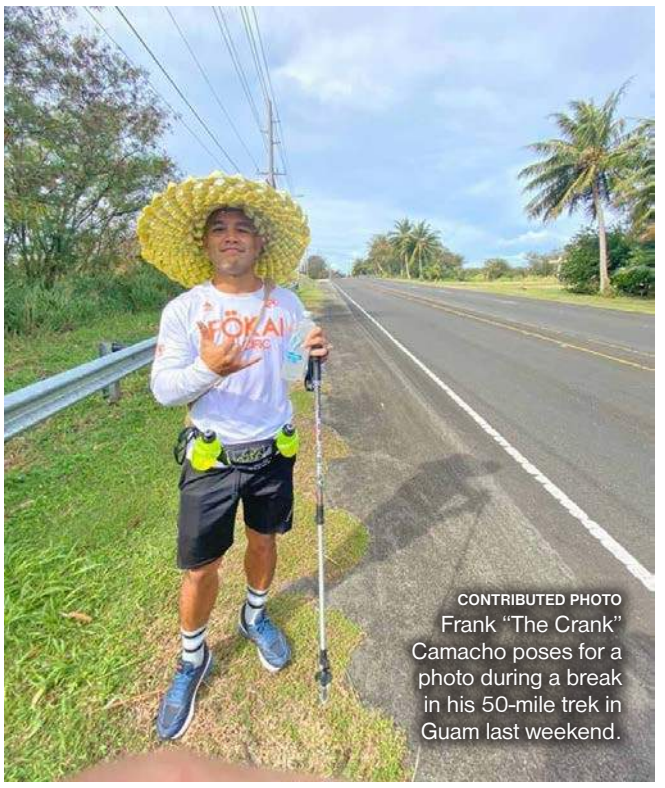
MLB has claimed billions in losses after playing the 2020 season almost entirely without fans, and free agents were met by a sluggish market this winter.

Several notable players remain available. Righty starter Jake Odorizzi, an All-Star in 2019, is still without a deal after various ailments ruined his 2020. Gold Glove center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr. hasn't found a home, either. Trevor Rosenthal, Taijuan Walker and others could help a contender, too.

Championship managers Alex Cora and AJ Hinch are back after serving one-year bans stemming from the 2017 Houston Astros cheating scandal. Cora—fired by Boston shortly before last year's camp opened was re-hired by the Red Sox, where he won a title in 2018. Hinch, fired as Houston's manager in the wake of his suspension, was hired to replace Ron Gardenhire in Detroit.

The only other new manager is a throwback—Tony La Russa, now in charge of the Chicago White Sox.

‘Crank’ survives 24-hour challenge



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Frank “The Crank” Camacho poses for a photo during a break in his 50-mile trek in Guam last weekend.

PATRICK CAMACHO
Frank “The Crank” Camacho, sixth left, is joined by his friends and supporters as they walk/run in the villages in Guam for 24 hours.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Frank “The Crank” Camacho completed the 24-hour challenge of running/walking around the villages in Guam and raised more than $16,000 for the Guam Homeless Coalition.

Camacho ran/walked from Merizo Pier last Friday morning and made it to Ritidian Point the next day for a 50-mile journey that aimed at raising awareness about homelessness on Guam.

After the trek, the Marianas warrior was definitely exhausted, but was pleased with the results and the lessons he learned from taking on the challenge.

“The run/walk for 50 miles has made me a better man. The physical excruciating pain, the mental struggles, and the amazing conversations! It is unforgettable and I will forever be grateful for it. Exhaust the body, proceed the mind, and cultivate the spirit,” said Camacho, who was joined in the trek by Guam Time chief executive officer Matt Sgro, Marine veteran Ray Shinohara, and Fokai Industries cofounder Roman Dela Cruz.

Camacho added that the trek had two challenging parts. One was walking in darkness for six miles heading up north to Ritidian Point, as their bodies were already in pain and his feet felt like “stepping on glass with every step.”

“And it seemed like the road to Ritidian Point never ends. The other hardest part for myself was mile 48 the next day when the sun was out. I was almost mentally broke. I was going to just sit down and lie down on the road and quit. and wait for my wife to pick me up, but I just kept stepping and stepping,” the Ultimate Fighting Championships veteran said.

PATRICK CAMACHO
Frank “The Crank” Camacho and his supporters pose for a photo at Malesso Pier.

The MMA fighter acknowledged the people they met along the way and the support they received to survive the challenge and raise funds for the homeless people of the island.

“What stood out the most was seeing and experiencing our true Inafamaulek and Hafa Adai spirit live! The amount of honks, waves, water, Gatorade, food, and love on our trek was cool as heck. It’s so nice to see we, as an island community, still have it inside us! I am confident we will all continue to show the same love and kindness to our underserved communities and our Che’lu’s in need,” the 31-year-old athlete said.

Camacho also thanked Adas Trust, Bank of Guam, Cars Plus, Calvo’s Insurance, Delta Tire & Lube Monster Hydro, Paradise Fitness, Payless Supermarkets, Pepsi Guam, and 76 Circle K for their donation,

“I am far from a runner or endurance athlete, but I CAN. Next stop, Saipan,” Camacho said.

MEN'S

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and the unranked Eric Abragan reached the Final Four after downing their respective opponents. Loken hammered Paul Jang, 6-0, 6-0; Lee swept Gary Ramsey, 6-4, 6-1; Abragan stunned Edwin Simbulan, 6-4, 6-2; and Abel outclassed Bishop Ryan Jimenez, 6-1, 6-2.

Meanwhile, the other singles events in the Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Association’s first tournament of the season have a round-robin format with the winners to be decided next weekend.

In the boys U16 singles, David Kwon and Dev Bachani won their first two matches with the former topping Cody Shimizu, 6-1, 6-2, and Min Seong Kim, 6-1, 6-0. Bachani also won over Kim, 6-0, 6-4, and then defeated Sam Culp, 6-1, 7-5.

In the girls U14 singles, Hoo Wang prevailed over Anna Kwon, 6-1, 7-6 (3), while Irin Chung eked out a 7-6 (5), 3-6, 10-13 victory against Savita Sikkel. In the boys U14 singles, Simon Tang notched a pair of wins last weekend after sweeping Takeru Jim, 6-1, 6-2, and shutting down Henry Choi, 6-0, 6-0. Wataru Kadokura also won over Jim, 6-0, 6-0, while June Yu dominated Choi, 6-0, 6-2.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Irin Chung hits the ball from the baseline during her and Daniel Kang’s game against Edwin Simbulan and Cody Shimizu in the mixed-up doubles event yesterday at the American Memorial Park tennis courts.

Pebble win makes Berger feel he belongs among best

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. (AP)—Daniel Berger believes he is among the best in golf. At least he stopped short of assigning his own ranking.

He is part of the fabled high school graduating class of 2011, except Berger is often listed in the “other” category. The group includes Jordan Spieth with his three legs of the career Grand Slam among 14 victories worldwide, and Justin Thomas with his 13 worldwide wins and a PGA Championship.

Xander Schauffele was only mentioned after his two-win rookie season included the Tour Championship, and then he backed that up with a World Golf Championships title, seemingly constant appearances near the top of the leaderboard in majors and a world ranking that rarely is out of the top 10.

Berger was not even among the top 100 when golf returned from the COVID-19 pandemic in June. He had changed swing coaches to Cameron McCormick. He was recovering from wrist injuries that left him wondering if he’d ever get back.

And then he won at Colonial in a playoff. He nearly won at Hilton Head. He was runner-up at a World Golf Championship in Memphis, Tennessee, on the TPC Southwind course where he had won twice.

More validation arrived at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, a tournament he probably should have been playing more often. He tied for 10th in 2015. He didn’t return until last year and tied for fifth (albeit 10 shots behind Nick Taylor).

While his victory Sunday won’t go down as the biggest of his four PGA Tour titles by world ranking standards, it might have been the most satisfying the way he won.

Berger lost a share of the lead Saturday on the par-5 18th by flaring his drive out to the right, over a bunker and by inches out-of-bounds, leading to double bogey. He arrived on the 18th hole Sunday in a tie for the lead with Maverick McNealy, who shot 31 on the back nine.

“One of the best finishing holes I’ve ever played,” Berger said. “Obviously, with everything that happened on Saturday, hitting that ball out-of-bounds, to step up there and hit a great drive and then one of the best 3-woods I’ve ever hit in my life, and then to make that putt is as good as it gets for me.”

He hit 3-wood from 250 yards to 30 feet, and wanting only to two-putt for the win, watched it dropped for eagle. It was his fourth eagle of the week, tying a record at Pebble since such statistics started being kept in 1983.

That’s two victories in his last 16 starts over eight months, and while he only moved up two spots to No. 13 in the world because of the weak field, it’s better than when he returned.

Nuggets rout Lakers, AD re-aggravates Achilles

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Nadal, Djokovic advance to quarterfinals

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Mt. Carmel School 1 unbeaten

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Mt. Carmel School 1 finished the preliminary round of the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic 4v4 Beach Volleyball League unscathed after sweeping their last three games in the boys division.

Merrick Toves, Jeremiah Diaz, Richard Steele, Brandon Lee, Jun Beom Kim, and Sam Ryu defeated Saipan International School 1, 21-12, in the first of their final three games last Saturday at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan and then dominated Marianas High School 3, 21-6, and 2, 21-9, to hand MCS 1 a 9-0 record in the 10-team field.

With their perfect mark, the Knights secured the top seed in the playoffs, which will take place on Feb. 26 and 27, and drew a bye in the first round of the double-elimination competition. The rest of the seeding and team records have yet to be finalized, but all the 10 squads will advance to the playoffs and will be joined by one group each from Rota and Tinian.

Mt. Carmel 1 recorded its pair of wins against the MHS teams on Court 4, while its victory over SIS 1 was made on Court 2.

In other results on Court 2, Agape Christian School 1 downed SIS 2, 21-18, and Agape 2, 21-19; GCA outclassed MHS 3, 21-13; MHS 1 beat MHS 2, 21-17; SIS 2 also prevailed over MHS 2, 21-9; and Agape 2 slipped past MHS 3, 21-18.

On Court 1, GCA swept its last three games, winning over Agape 2, 21-12, MHS 1, 21-17, and MCS 2, 21-15, while SIS 1 and 2 both defeated MHS 1, 21-15 and 21-19. MCS 2 got one victory on Court 1 after edging Agape 1, 21-18.

On Court 3, GCA notched its first win of the weekend after topping SIS 2, 21-15, while Agape 2 nipped SIS 1, 21-18. On Court 4, SIS 1 bagged a pair of wins as the Geckos outlasted MCS 2, 21-17, and MHS 3, 21-15, while Agape 1 triumphed against MHS 3, 21-17, and MCS 2 routed Agape 2, 21-6.

Meanwhile, the girls high school division will begin its playoff round this Friday, starting at 5:30pm.

MHS 1 is the top seed in the division with its 9-0 mark, drawing a bye in the first round along with GCA 2 (8-2), SIS 1 (7-2), GCA 1 (6-3). Rota and Tinian did not play in the preliminary round and automatically took the No. 5 and 6 seeding, respectively, while MHS 2 (6-3) is seeded No. 7 and is followed by MCS 1 (4-5), SIS 2 (3-6), MHS 3 (2-7), MHS 4 (1-8), and MCS 2 (1-8).

The first four matches in the playoffs will have MCS 1 battling SIS 2, MHS 2 facing MHS 3, Tinian taking on MHS 4, and Rota meeting MCS 2.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Mt. Carmel School's Richard Steele spikes the ball during their earlier game against Grace Christian Academy in the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic 4v4 Beach Volleyball League at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan sand courts.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Sam Ryu, left, and Sean Lee return to their respective opponents in the mixed-up doubles event of the 2021 White Coconut Tennis Classic yesterday at the American Memorial Park tennis courts. Ryu and Lee are also entered in the men's singles event and they both made it to the semifinal round.

Men's singles semis cast complete

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The four semis seats in the men's singles event in the 2021 White Coconut Tennis Classic were taken yesterday with Ji Min Woo, Sam Ryu, Colin Ramsey, and Sean Lee prevailing in their respective matches at the American Memorial Park and Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan tennis courts.

No. 1 seed Woo defeated Andy Kim, 6-1, 6-1, to advance to the semis against Ryu, who eliminated Jun Wang, 6-1, 6-2. Ramsey also swept David Kwon, 6-4, 6-2, to reach the Final Four and set a semis duel with the No. 2 seed Lee, who ousted Vincent Tudela, 6-3, 6-3. The semis and final matches will be played this weekend.

In other results, the boys U12 singles is also down to the Final Four with Nason Wessel, Si Woo Lee, Ki Won Lee, and Yutaka Kadokura staying in contention for the division crown. The defending champion Wessel moved one step away from a return trip to the finals after beating Ian Chae last Saturday, 6-0, 6-1. Wessel will take on Si Woo, who bagged a semis berth at the upper half of the draw after nosing out Henry Yeom, 6-1, 6-3. At the lower half of the draw, Ki Won won over Landon Pudney, 6-2, 6-4, to advance in the semis against Kadokura, who also eased past Ji Hun Park, 6-3, 6-2.

In the women's singles, Elizabeth Culp and Grace Choi defeated Jeane Bracken, 6-3, 6-1, and Yuko Kumada, 8-5, respectively, to join Top 2 seeds Serin Chung and Hye Jin Elliot in the semifinals.

In the men's over 40 singles results last Sunday, No. 1 seed Peter Loken, No. 2 Tomas Abel, No. 3 Dong Min Lee,

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